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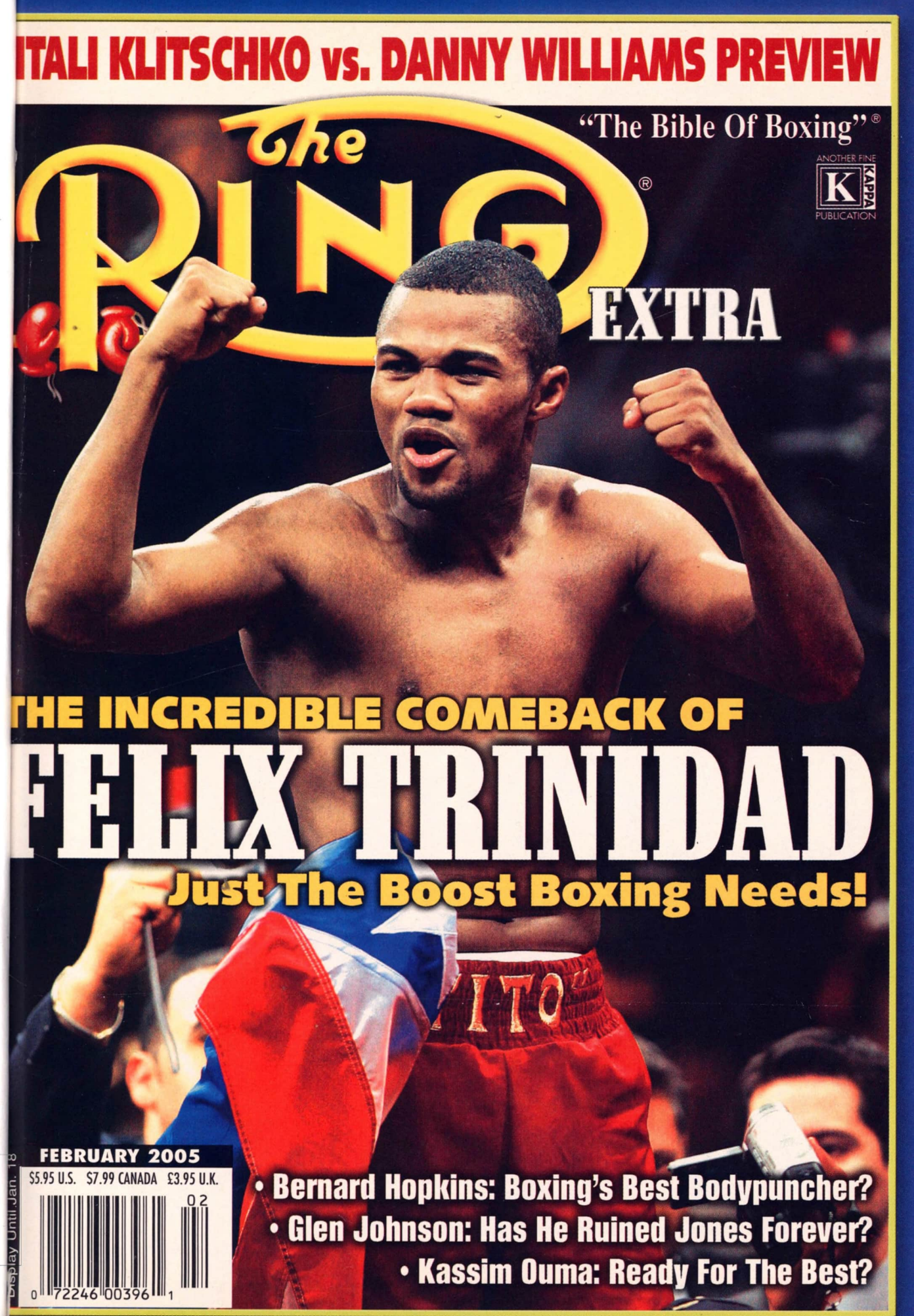

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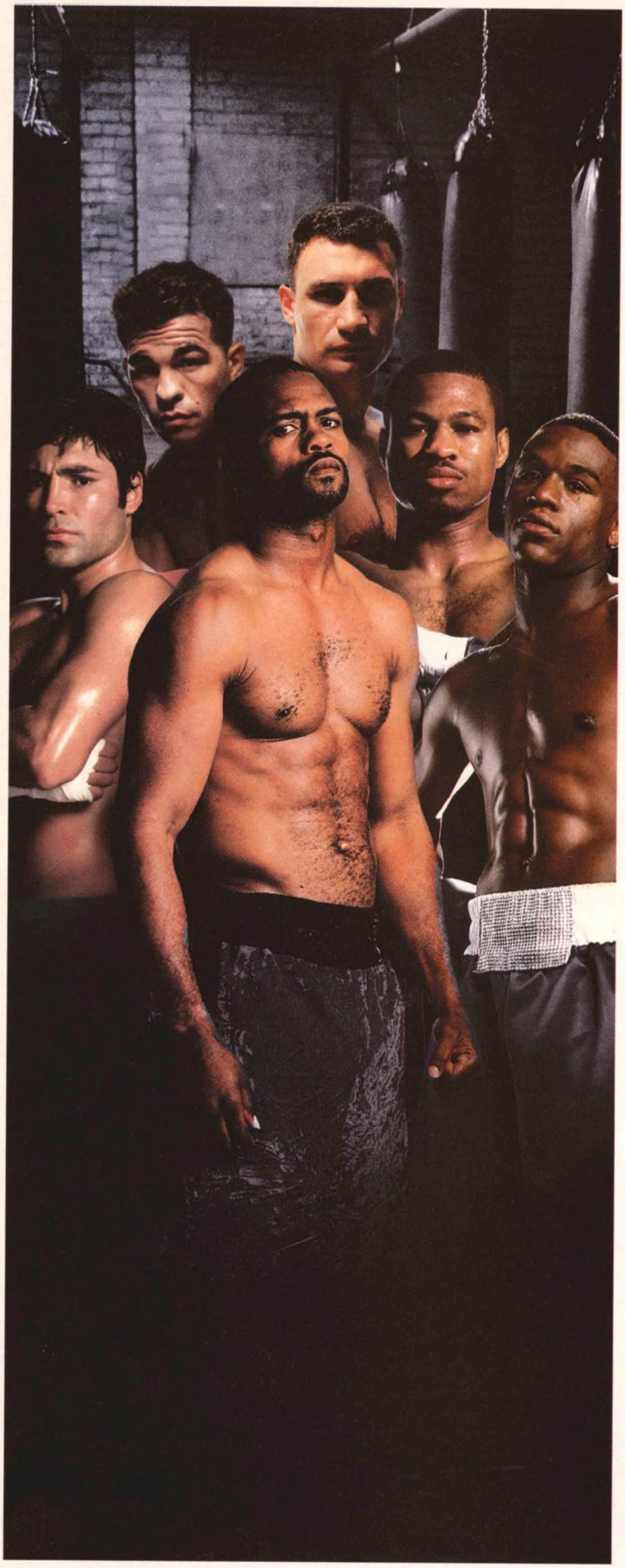

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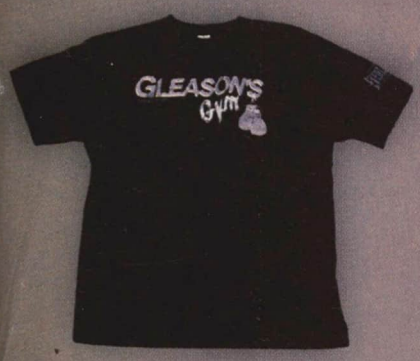

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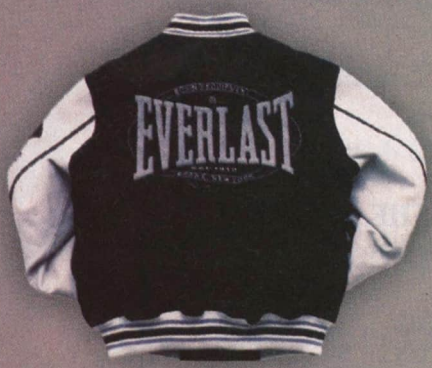

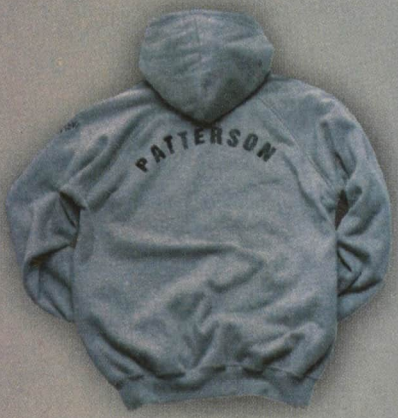

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The RING EXTRA

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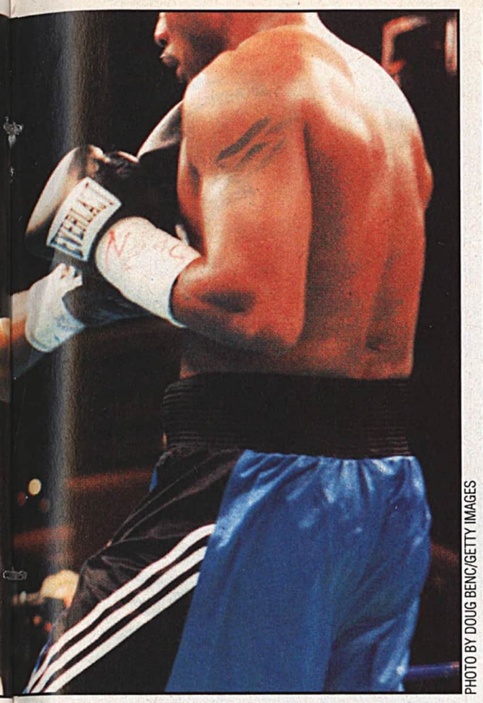

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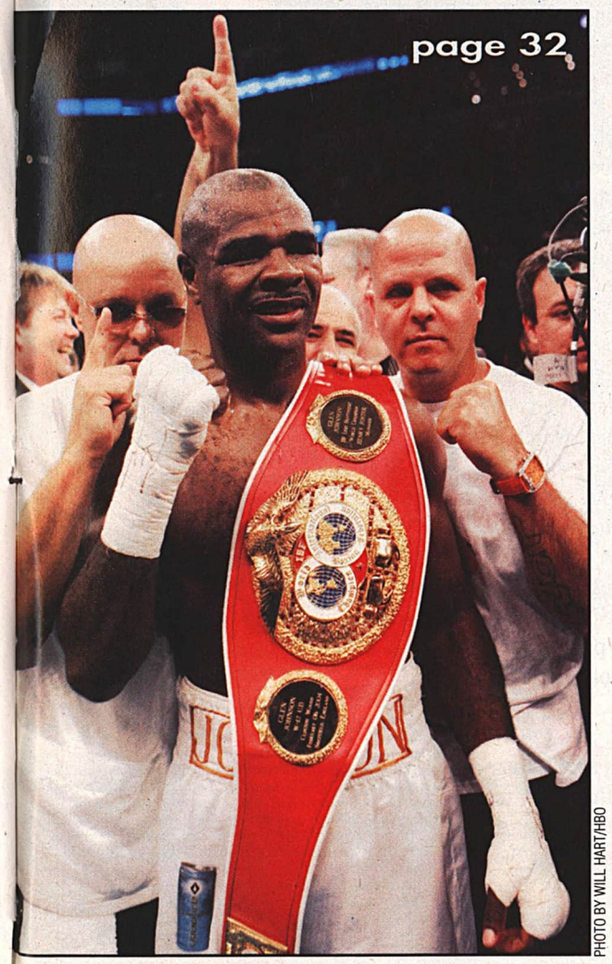

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RINGSIDE

While boxing writers can't seem to resist churning out pessimistic copy and the mainstream media continues to virtually ignore the sport, the Sweet Science has proven once again that if the right fights are made, there are still plenty of people willing to pay a lot of money to watch.

In fact, during the two-week span between September 18 and October 2, approximately 1,470,000 households purchased pay-per-view boxing. Roughly one million bought the Bernard Hopkins-Oscar De La Hoya PPV, with an additional 470,000 buying the Felix Trinidad-Ricardo Mayorga telecast. Those numbers might pale in comparison to the size of the audience for the Super Bowl or World Series, but those events are on free TV. It's anybody's guess how many football and baseball fans would shell out from $50 to $55 to watch on PPV.

I'm not trying to convince anyone that boxing is more popular than football or baseball, but the truth is that it's a lot more popular than most sports editors of daily newspapers and producers of TV sports news would have you believe. While it's impossible to deny that boxing is frequently its own worst enemy, most of the media generally has its head where the sun don't shine when something positive happens.

Hopkins-De La Hoya was a huge event by any standards, but you wouldn't have known it by the one-page article *Sports Illustrated* ran the following week. That's right, just a single page on the biggest fight of the year! And when Hopkins had a parade in his hometown of Philadelphia a few weeks after knocking out "The Golden Boy," the city's only sports talk radio station gave it zero publicity. This isn't just anti-boxing; it's irresponsible journalism.

If you want things to change, the best way to start is by taking the fight to the culprits. Begin by complaining to the media outlets that refuse to give boxing a fair shake, and if that doesn't work, withhold your support by boycotting them and the products that advertise in those outlets. The same financial power you exercise when purchasing a ticket to a fight or paying your monthly cable bill can also be used to force the media to do its job.

***

When THE RING launched its new championship policy in the April 2002 issue, we established two criteria for filling championship vacancies: 1) Winning a box-off between the number-one and number-two contenders, or in certain circumstances, a box-off between the number-one and number-three contenders; 2) Unifying all three alphabet titles.

But, as some savvy readers have pointed out, there is a minor flaw in this procedure. With alphabet belts so easily obtained, hypothetically, a situation could arise where a fighter not rated among THE RING's top two or three contenders could conceivably unify the alphabet titles. While this hasn't happened yet, we have decided to eliminate the possibility by purging the alphabet titles from our championship policy. From now on, the only way a championship vacancy can be filled is by the box-off method.

***

When THE RING ceased publishing the alphabet ratings three issues ago, I wondered if there would be any sort of backlash from customers. Well, I'm happy to report that so far I have received just *one* letter of protest. It just goes to show that our readers are not only among the most loyal in the world; they're also among the smartest.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 84, No. 1 **February 2005**

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ROUND ONE

ANOTHER RETIREMENT ENDS

On September 25, on reservation land owned by the Potawatomi tribe at the back of FireLake Casino in Shawnee, Oklahoma, Riddick Bowe returned to the ring. After eight years in retirement, the former world heavyweight champion won by second-round knockout against journeyman Marcus Rhode, an Arkansas radio ad salesman. Bowe's big, broad smile conveyed his contentment to the 4,000 who paid to see him fight, but legitimate concerns remained about the deposed king's comeback.

When Bowe retired in December 1996, after a second savagely punishing encounter with Andrew Golota (like the first, it ended in the Pole's disqualification for repeated low blows), the then-29-year-old looked a shadow of his former self. At his best, his old trainer, Eddie Futch, said of him, "He could have been one of the all-time greats." Against Golota, he took so many punches to his head that in the postfight interview he was incomprehensible.

Domestic turmoil took a further toll on the likeable big man known as "Big Daddy." Judy, his then wife, fled with their children from their Maryland home to Cornelius, North Carolina, when his behavior became increasingly erratic. He lasted only 11 days after signing up to the Marine Corps Reserve and, without boxing, was lost. In the early-morning of February 25, 1998, Bowe set out to bring his family back—by force. His eventual conviction for kidnapping ("they should have charged me only with a crime of passion," he said) resulted in an 18-month jail sentence. His lawyers said he was suffering from brain damage, but he insists now "that was a ploy to get me off the charges." When he was freed on April 17, 2004, he was resolved to fighting again.

Janks Morton, Sugar Ray Leonard's old trainer, spent a couple of months working with him. Bowe's manager, Jimmy Adams, and Bowe's second wife, Teri, now his promoter, put the fight together in Shawnee. Rhode, 29-26-1 (25), had been knocked out in three of his last four fights, but came out throwing haymakers. Bowe, officially announced at 253 pounds (but suspected to be as much as 30 pounds more; he weighed *himself* in and announced his own weight), was wild as well, but hurt Rhode soon enough, sending him to the floor with a short right uppercut and left to the body. Rhode beat the count of referee Gary Ritter, but was barely able to hang in there as Bowe looked for the finish before the bell intervened.

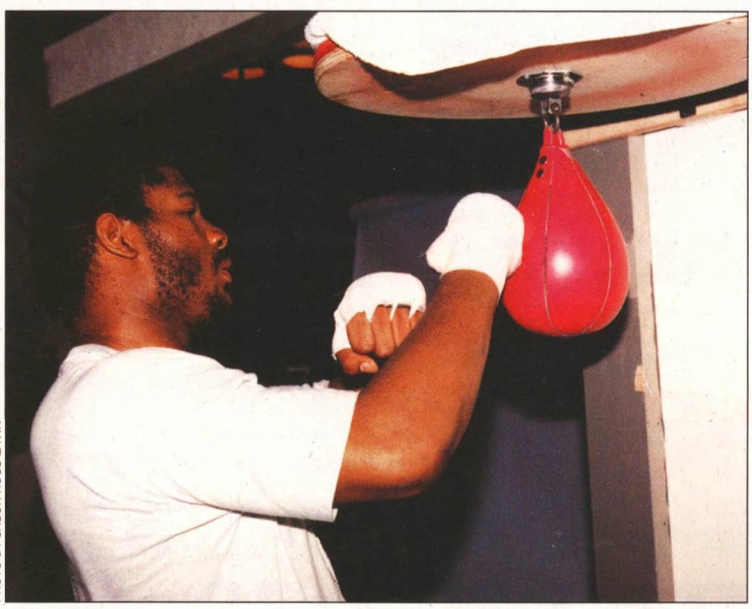


PHOTO BY JASON ROSS LAVIN

For better or worse, Bowe's back

A right hand sent Rhode down again in the second. He managed to get up, but his legs were gone. Another right hand by Bowe sent him crashing back to the canvas, and referee Ritter rightly waved it over at 2:45 of the second round.

"He gave me enough to shake off the cobwebs, but he didn't offer me too much of anything," Bowe, 41-1 (33) with 1 no-contest, said of Rhode. "Before the fight I was very nervous and anxious. When I got in there, I was like a kid in a candy store. I wanted everything. The people got me excited and that made me a little tight. I missed some punches, but I'm doing pretty good."

Bowe made $100,000 and said he is looking to fight 15 more times in the next 18 months. But in Oklahoma, he was in one of boxing's remote outposts, and many obstacles will be placed in his way before he comes close to the capital.

—Brian Doogan

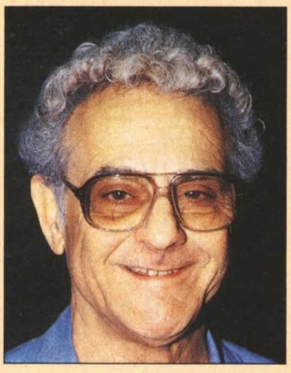
RALPH CITRO, 1926-2004

Ralph Citro, who died October 2, was one of boxing's few Renaissance men. From his early days as an amateur boxer to his election to the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2001, Citro did it all.

After a stint training boxers in Camden, New Jersey, Citro opened a gym in nearby Blackwood in 1958, where he trained and managed boxers at night and sold insurance by day. He also served briefly as matchmaker for a series of fights promoted by former heavyweight champion Jersey Joe Walcott.

During the 1970s and '80s, Citro became a familiar face to boxing fans around the world working as cutman for numerous well-known boxers, including Thomas Hearns and other fighters from Detroit's celebrated Kronk Gym. Citro also worked as cutman for 16 of Riddick Bowe's fights, including his title-winning bout with Evander Holyfield in '92. During this time, Citro also wrote *So You Want To Be A Cornerman*, a guidebook for aspiring seconds, and was the recipient of the James J. Walker Award, presented by the Boxing Writers Association of America, for long and meritorious service to the sport.

But despite the above accomplishments, Citro's biggest contribution to the sport was the creation of boxing's first computerized databank. From 1984 to '93, he was the editor and publisher of *Computer Boxing Update*, an annual compilation of up-to-date records of active fighters. After he sold the company, it became known as Fight Fax Inc., and is still regarded as the industry's leading compiler of records.



Citro: Hall of Famer dies at 78

For the next seven years, Citro served as director of the International Boxing Research Organization, a group dedicated to maintaining the accuracy of historical records. In this capacity, he spent countless hours in libraries and newspaper morgues, pouring over clippings in order to assemble precise records of old-time boxers.

Although his pioneering work with computerized record-keeping had a large and lasting impact on the sport, for those who know Ralph personally, it is his congenial personality that will be missed the most. For years he held court at his Blackwood office on an almost daily basis, where the only requirement for inclusion was a love of boxing.

—Nigel Collins

THE FIGHT FOR FIGHTER OF THE YEAR

When Antonio Tarver pulled off the stunner of the new millennium in May, knocking out Roy Jones with one punch, a lot of fans and journalists alike were ready to just hand in their Fighter of the Year ballots on the spot. But "Tarver KO 2 Jones" wasn't the last unexpected development of 2004, and as a result, the Fighter of the Year race is wide open heading into the final month of action.

Tarver's bid has been hurt by one force beyond Tarver's control, and one force very much within his control. He was hurt in September when Glen Johnson iced Jones, making Tarver's achievement appear—fair or not—less extraordinary than it originally seemed. And he was hurt by his own inexplicable inactivity following the breakout win; it's hard to be Fighter of the Year when you only punch for pay once between January and December.

If Tarver fights Johnson in December, as has been proposed, the winner will emerge as a leading candidate. But if Tarver fights mandatory Paul Briggs—or, even worse, doesn't fight at all—the door is wide open for someone else to step through.

Who might that someone else be? Diego Corrales is having a helluva year, with hard-earned wins over both Joel Casamayor and previously undefeated Acelino Freitas. He's expected to fight again in December, and depending upon the opponent and the performance quality, "Chico" could be the man.

Erik Morales has also scored a pair of solid wins this year, over titlists Jesus Chavez and Carlos Hernandez, and if he wins his rubber match with arch-rival Marco Antonio Barrera on November 27, it might separate him from the pack.

Bernard Hopkins may not have done anything exceeding expectations in 2004 (aside from securing a fight with Oscar De La Hoya), but he did win by knockout in by far the biggest fight of the year, so his 2-0 campaign has to be given consideration.

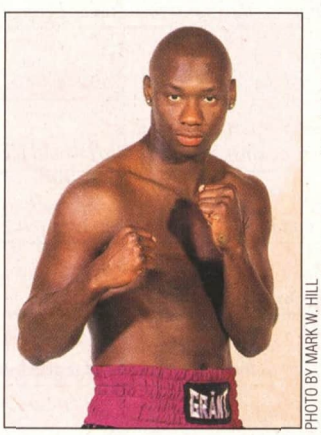


PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

Is Tarver still the leading candidate for Fighter of the Year?

And how's this for a dark horse: If Danny Williams pulls the upset of Vitali Klitschko in December, he will have beaten both Mike Tyson and Klitschko and will end the year as world heavyweight champion. It doesn't help his case that he suffered a loss to Michael Sprott in January, but in late-2004's mad scramble for Fighter of the Year honors, selection without perfection just might be possible.

—Eric Raskin

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
9-10-04	Arturo Morua W 10 Omar Weis	Telef	jw	C+	B-	C
Weis still fighting just well enough to lose						
9-11-04	Miguel Cotto KO 6 Kelson Pinto	HBO	jw	A-	B+	B-
If you can find anything Cotto does wrong in there, please let us know; we're still looking						
9-11-04	Daniel Santos Tech. Win 9 Antonio Margarito	HBO	jm	B+	A-	B
Santos is fun when he decides to stand still and punch a little						
9-16-04	Al Seeger W 8 Eric Aiken	Show	jf	C	B+	B-
Note to Aiken: Scoring a knockdown in the first doesn't secure the decision in an eight-round fight						
9-16-04	Rico Hoye W 12 Montell Griffin	Show	lh	B	B+	D-
The only thing worse than a boring fight is a boring fight in which the wrong guy gets the decision						
9-17-04	Yamplier Azcuy KO 1 Marcellus Brown	Telef	h	C+	C-	C+
Azcuy is no body-beautiful but he might be a guy to watch; he can crack						
9-18-04	Kofi Jantuah KO 1 Marco Antonio Rubio	PPV	jm	B-	B+	B+
A strong contender for Knockout of the Year; Jantuah on a roll						
9-18-04	Juan Manuel Marquez W 12 Orlando Salido	PPV	f	A	C	D+
Is it possible that Pacquiao scared all the fun out of Marquez? This was dreadful						
9-18-04	**Bernard Hopkins KO 9 Oscar De La Hoya**	**PPV**	**World m**	**A+**	**B+**	**B**
Hopkins better, smarter, more disciplined; and what language was Mayweather speaking between rounds?						
9-23-04	James Toney W 12 Rydell Booker	FOXSN	h	B+	C-	C+
Give Booker credit for taking a hard beating and staying in there						
9-24-04	Diego Morales W 10 Phillip Payne	Telef	jf	C+	D-	B-
Someone forgot to tell Payne journeymen are supposed to lie down; mismatch on paper, but decent fight in reality						
9-24-04	Jose Lopez KO 11 Juan Keb-Baas	Telem	fl	C+	B-	B-
Lopez prevails in rematch that was almost as good as original; Keb-Baas just outgunned						
9-25-04	Glen Johnson KO 9 Roy Jones	HBO	lh	A	B-	B+
How good was Jones for all those years? So good nobody knew he had no chin						
9-30-04	Christian Cruz KO 9 Enrique Ornelas	HBO L	sm	C+	B+	B+
How was this for a comeback? Cruz down three times before stopping Ornelas						
10-1-04	Ernesto Zavala KO 7 Hector Quiroz	Telef	jw	C+	C	C+
You just can't count on late subs to cooperate; Quiroz now 0-2-1 in his last three						
10-2-04	Travis Simms W 12 Bronco McKart	PPV	jm	B+	B-	C+
You'd think after three tries against Winky, McKart would have learned something about slick boxers						
10-2-04	Zab Judah KO 1 Wayne Martell	PPV	w	B	D-	C-
Give Judah the right guy and he'll look great every time out, but how many Martells are there in the top 10?						
10-2-04	Felix Trinidad KO 8 Ricardo Mayorga	PPV	m	A	B+	A
Welcome back, Tito; it was worth the wait						
10-2-04	Jeff Lacy KO 8 Syd Vanderpool	Show	sm	B+	A	B+
Lacy overcomes slow start to notch first win against a good, solid, experienced pro; call it a graduation						
10-2-04	Kassim Ouma W 12 Verno Phillips	Show	jm	A-	A	B
Anyone else notice Ouma seems completely impervious to punishment?						
10-2-04	Wladimir Klitschko Tech. Win 5 D. Williamson	Show	h	B	B	C
No really, Wlad—how's your forehead?						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

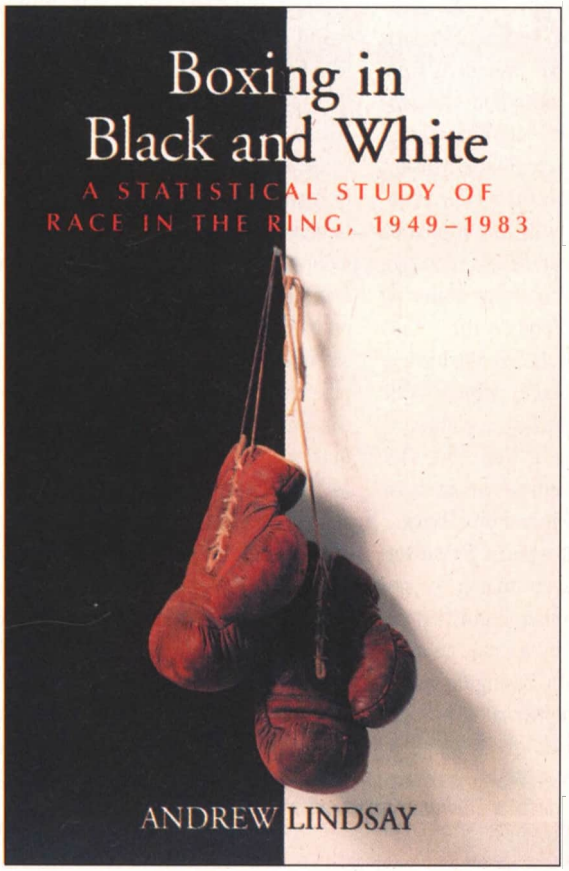
Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF

The role played by race in boxing, at least as it relates to Jack Johnson's and Joe Louis' eras, has been well-chronicled. But how has race factored into the Sweet Science since "The Brown Bomber's" heyday? Author Andrew Lindsay attempts to answer that question in his new book, *Boxing In Black And White: A Statistical Study Of Race In Boxing, 1949-1983* (McFarland & Company, 245 pages, softcover, $35).

At first glance, the years chosen by Lindsay may seem arbitrary, but the author has his reasons. It starts with Joe Louis' first retirement and ends with the last title challenge by a Caucasian American for the world heavyweight crown, Scott Frank's 1983 bout against Larry Holmes (Lou Savarese's challenge of George Foreman for the "linear" title, but for no major alphabet belts, apparently didn't qualify).



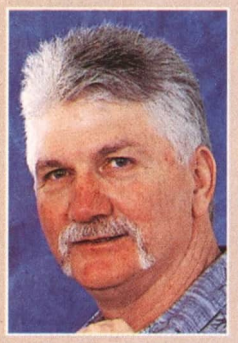
While few would suggest that blacks have not achieved a great deal in the heavyweight ranks since Louis' time, Lindsay poses some interesting questions: Did any forces exist to make achieving a top-10 ranking or a title shot more difficult than for white heavyweight contenders? Similarly, did white heavyweights enter the rankings or gain title challenges sooner than their records deserved? Does the predominantly white American public still long for a "Great White Hope" to rule boxing's most glamorous division? And if not, is it due to a more open-minded attitude toward race in our society, or has the wish for a white heavyweight champion simply laid dormant in conjunction with the paucity of white heavyweight hopefuls in recent years, waiting for a chance to reappear?

Armed with information culled from THE RING and its annual record books, Lindsay attempts to answer these and other questions through extensive, and at times dry, statistical studies preceded by a quite interesting narrative. The numerical portion of the book, though more suited for the bean counters among the reading audience, nonetheless arrives at some interesting conclusions that raise as many questions as they answer. It is possible that, with boxing's lessening popularity over the years, the author overestimates how much the general public may care about the question of race in today's world of Fistiana, but Lindsay's tome is still a worthy read for the true boxing fan.

Boxing In Black And White can be purchased by calling McFarland & Company at 1-800-253-2187 or through their Web site, www.mcfarlandpub.com.

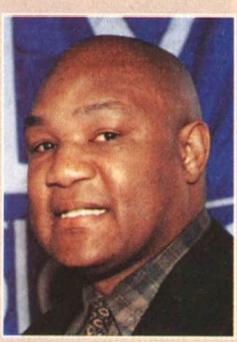
—Mike Greenhill

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Stone: Not guilty of death threats

In a minor **Bernard Hopkins-Oscar De La Hoya** aftermath note, no traces of lidocaine were found in De La Hoya's system according to the urinalysis results. "The Golden Boy" had received an injection three days before the fight as part of his treatment on a cut on his left hand, but it apparently cleared his body by fight time … The government oversight of the IBF, which began in January 2000 after former IBF President **Bob Lee** was accused of corruption, was terminated in late-September. The ratings still look pretty shady to us (**Shannan Taylor** over **Shane Mosley** at junior middleweight as of September, for instance), but apparently the U.S. Attorney's Office was satisfied with the alphabet group's "progress" … In mid-September, **Norman Stone**, manager and trainer of heavyweight **John Ruiz**, was found not guilty of making death threats. "I never threatened anybody's life," said Stone. "I'm glad it's over and the judge found the complainant a liar" … Promoter **Gary Shaw** and manager **Shelly Finkel** both filed lawsuits in early-September against **Ted Watley**, a partner of theirs in organizing the **Danny Williams-Mike Tyson** fight. The lawsuits accused Watley of making libelous statements about them and their business practices in an interview published on a boxing Web site … While **Chuck Wepner's** lawsuit against **Sylvester Stallone** for allegedly using Wepner's name inappropriately to promote the *Rocky* movies will go forward, two other claims by the former heavyweight contender were dismissed by a judge in mid-September: that Stallone was unjustly enriched by basing the original *Rocky* on Wepner's life story, and that Wepner suffered as a result of Stallone's supposed financial promises … Former flyweight/bantamweight contender **Robbie Regan** of Wales was sentenced to 18 months in prison in mid-September for attacking a couple in their home in April. Two other assailants were also jailed … 1980s and early-'90s cruiserweight contender **Tyrone Booze** was injured in mid-September when a garbage truck backed up over his leg. The 45-year-old Booze, who had been working for the Clearwater, Florida, waste department for nine years, was listed in good condition the week after the accident … Super middleweight fringe contender **Nordin Ben Salah**, better known in boxing circles as **Fighting Nordin**, was murdered in Amsterdam in late-September. He was shot several times in what is believed to be a gang-related slaying. Nordin, 32, had a career record of 36-2-1 (26) … Well-known British cutman and manager **Dennie Mancini** died in early-September of a heart attack brought on by diabetes. Mancini, who worked the corners of such notables as **Nigel Benn** and **Sven Ottke**, was 71 … Noted boxing memorabilia collector and **Jack Dempsey** expert **Bob Shepard** died of cancer over the summer at age 74 … Salton Inc., the company that makes **George Foreman's** Lean, Mean, Fat-Reducing Grilling Machine, is in major financial trouble, it was revealed in early-September. Through the first three-quarters of 2004, Salton had lost $95-million for the year, with analysts speculating that the Foreman Grill has been selling below expectations recently because most customers who want one already have one … Finishing on a positive note, the **James Toney-Rydell Booker** fight, which was televised live on Fox Sports Net's *The Best Damn Sports Show Period*, received a rating of 0.62, more than triple the show's typical 0.19 rating for that night of the week. Fox Sports is reportedly looking into presenting more live boxing on *BDSSP* in the future.



Foreman: Grill company in trouble

THE PUNCHLINES

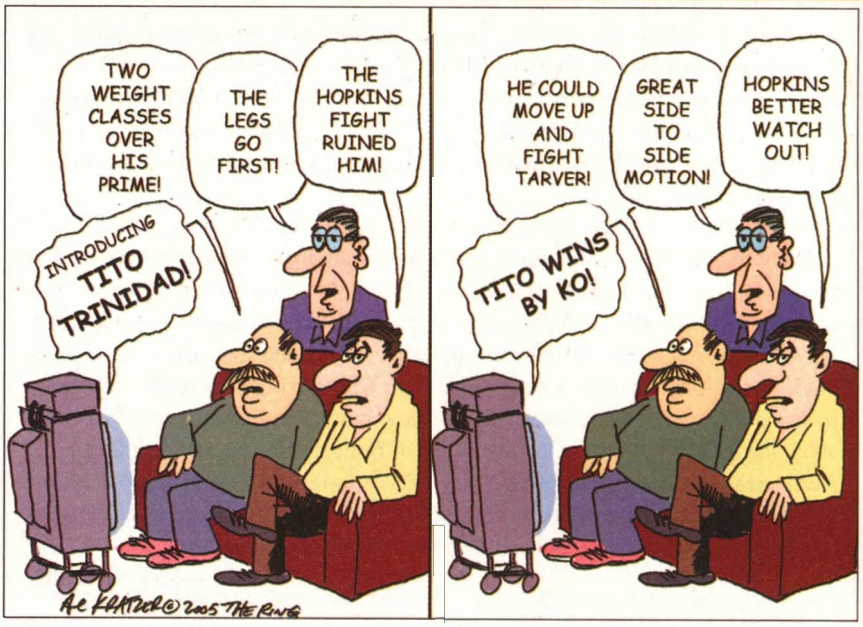
"It just goes to prove you cannot send a boy—even a golden one—to do a man's job."

—Junior middleweight champ Winky Wright, on the Hopkins-De La Hoya fight

"The knee feels fine, I've been training Confuciously."

—Mike Tyson, to ESPN's Pedro Gomez, regarding his latest comeback attempt

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



The RING
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Middleweight
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Junior Welterweight
3. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Light Heavyweight
4. **WINKY WRIGHT**
   Junior Middleweight
5. **ERIK MORALES**
   Junior Lightweight
6. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Featherweight
7. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
   Featherweight
8. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Junior Welterweight
9. **JAMES TONEY**
   Heavyweight
10. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
    Lightweight

(For period ended October 7, 2004)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Glen Johnson (third last issue) is the new number-one contender following his kayo of Roy Jones, who falls from first to third.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Previously unranked Jeff Lacy debuts at number nine on the strength of his TKO of Syd Vanderpool (10th last issue). Vanderpool exits. Lacy's arrival also forces down Cristian Sanavia (ninth last issue) to the number-10 position.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Felix Trinidad's return and kayo of Ricardo Mayorga allows him to re-enter the 160-pound ranks at number four. Trinidad's reemergence also forces everybody fourth or below in the previous issue down one spot each, while Raymond Joval (10th last issue) departs.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Travis Simms (eighth last issue) leaps to sixth thanks to his win over Bronco McKart (ninth last issue), who falls to 10th. The reshuffling causes Javier Castillejo (sixth last issue) and Rodney Jones (seventh last issue) to dip to seventh and eighth, respectively, while Kofi Jantuah (10th last issue) improves to ninth.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Vernon Forrest (second last issue) exits due to prolonged inactivity and the fact that he intends to campaign as a junior middleweight if and when he returns. His departure allows everybody rated below him last issue to climb one rung each and makes room for Cosme Rivera at number 10.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Steve Johnston (sixth last issue) exits because he has not fought in more than a year. This boosts everybody rated below him last issue one spot. Isaac Hlatshwayo is new at number 10.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Ivan Hernandez debuts at number four due to his upset stoppage of Mark Johnson, who falls from second to fifth. Johnson's demotion allows Alexander Munoz (third last issue) and Luis Perez (fourth last issue) to advance to second and third, respectively. The realignment at the top of the division forces everybody previously ranked fifth or below down one position, while Jose Navarro (10th last issue) departs.

FLYWEIGHTS: Even though he won a 12-round decision over Bebis Mendoza, Rosendo Alvarez lost his junior flyweight championship at the scales and announced he would no longer fight at 108 pounds. Therefore Alvarez is now rated sixth at flyweight. Alvarez' arrival pushes everybody ranked sixth or below last issue down one slot each. Takefumi Sakata (10th last issue) is gone.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: The title is vacant due to Alvarez' move to the 112-pound division, but there are no changes among the contenders.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Jones (fourth last issue) departs following his second consecutive kayo loss. Everyone rated below him last issue advances one position, and lightweight champ Jose Luis Castillo enters at number 10. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended October 7, 2004

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

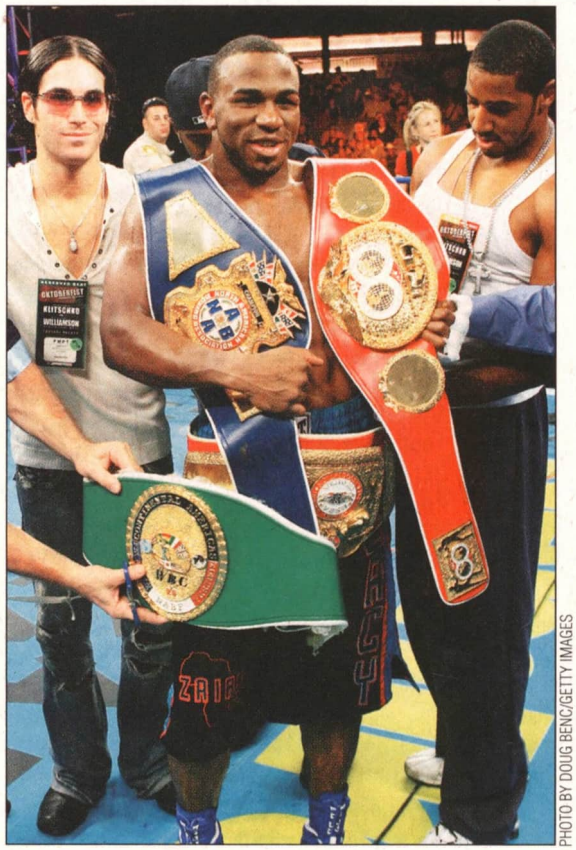


PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

Jeff Lacy entered the 168-pound rankings by bumping off Syd Vanderpool

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: VITALI KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 34-2 (33)

1. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 37-2-1 (20)
2. **JOHN RUIZ**
Methuen, MA 40-5-1 (28)
3. **JAMES TONEY**
Ann Arbor, MI 68-4-2 (43)
4. **HASIM RAHMAN**
Baltimore, MD 39-5-1 (32)
5. **MONTE BARRETT**
Queens, NY 30-3 (6)
6. **ANDREW GOLOTA**
Poland 38-4-1 (31)
7. **FRES OQUENDO**
Puerto Rico 24-3 (15)
8. **JAMEEL McCLINE**
Port Jefferson, NY 31-3-1 (19)
9. **DANNY WILLIAMS**
England 32-3 (27)
10. **LAMON BREWSTER**
Los Angeles, CA 31-2 (27)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: WINKY WRIGHT
St. Petersburg, FL 47-3 (25)

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 39-3 (35)
2. **KASSIM OUMA**
W. Palm Beach, FL 20-1-1 (13)
3. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Aurora, CO 38-9-1 (20)
4. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 29-2-1 (20)
5. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
Oxnard, CA 24-2 (22)
6. **TRAVIS SIMMS**
Norwalk, CT 24-0 (18)
7. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 58-5 (40)
8. **RODNEY JONES**
Lafayette, LA 34-3 (22)
9. **KOFI JANTUAH**
Las Vegas, NV 28-1 (18)
10. **BRONCO McKART**
Monroe, MI 47-6 (31)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 38-2-2 (29)

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 43-2-1 (33)
2. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
Mexico 58-4 (41)
3. **SCOTT HARRISON**
Scotland 22-2-1 (12)
4. **INJIN CHI**
South Korea 29-2-1 (18)
5. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 63-14 (29)
6. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 21-0 (14)
7. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Tulsa, OK 25-1 (15)
8. **DERRICK GAINER**
Pensacola, FL 39-6-1 (24)
9. **MICHAEL BRODIE**
England 35-2-1 (23)
10. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 34-0 (19)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 53-3-1 (35)
2. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 36-3 (27)
3. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR**
France 25-2-2 (16)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 21-0 (17)
5. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA**
Venezuela 24-3-1 (14)
6. **SALIM MEDJKOUNE**
France 43-5-1 (21)
7. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG**
Thailand 37-1-1 (19)
8. **JORGE LACIERVA**
Mexico 26-5-4 (18)
9. **ART SIMONYAN**
Glendale, CA 14-0-1 (7)
10. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA**
Argentina 18-0 (10)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 32-3 (29)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 45-1-2 (31)
3. **JOHNNY BREDAHL**
Denmark 55-2 (26)
4. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN**
Thailand 57-8 (39)
5. **GENARO GARCIA**
Mexico 31-4 (19)
6. **CRUZ CARBAJAL**
Mexico 24-12-1 (20)
7. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 23-4-3 (14)
8. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 16-0 (15)
9. **RICARDO VARGAS**
Mexico 36-10-3 (11)
10. **JHONNY GONZALEZ**
Mexico 25-4 (23)

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
   Guyana 21-0 (17)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
   France 30-2 (21)
3. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 44-12-2 (29)
4. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Atlanta, GA 23-1-1 (22)
5. **KELVIN DAVIS**
   Reno, NV 21-2-1 (16)
6. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England 33-6 (25)
7. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
   Philadelphia, PA 16-0 (9)
8. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 49-5 (23)
9. **DALE BROWN**
   Canada 31-3-1 (20)
10. **PIETRO AURINO**
    Italy 29-2 (13)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ANTONIO TARVER
Orlando, FL 22-2 (18)

1. **GLEN JOHNSON**
   Miami, FL 41-9-2 (28)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
   Hungary 21-0 (13)
3. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL 49-3 (38)
4. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA 36-2 (22)
5. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany 48-1 (38)
6. **CLINTON WOODS**
   England 35-3-1 (21)
7. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   Franco 46-2 (30)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
   Australia 23-1 (17)
9. **THOMAS ULRICH**
   Germany 27-1 (19)
10. **RICO HOYE**
    Detroit, MI 18-0 (14)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 37-0 (30)
2. **MANNY SIACA**
   Puerto Rico 18-4 (16)
3. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
   Australia 21-2 (16)
4. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 30-5-1 (26)
5. **DANNY GREEN**
   Australia 19-1 (18)
6. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA 40-9 (28)
7. **MADS LARSEN**
   Denmark 45-2 (37)
8. **ROBIN REID**
   England 37-4-1 (27)
9. **JEFF LACY**
   St. Petersburg, FL 17-0 (14)
10. **CRISTIAN SANAVIA**
    Italy 33-1 (12)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 45-2-1 (32)

1. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England 40-1 (35)
2. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Los Angeles, CA 37-4 (29)
3. **FELIX STURM**
   Germany 21-1 (9)
4. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Puerto Rico 42-1 (35)
5. **ROBERT ALLEN**
   Atlanta, GA 36-5 (27)
6. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. 34-3-1 (25)
7. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
   Little Rock, AR 21-0 (16)
8. **MASELINO MASOE**
   New Zealand 26-2 (25)
9. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
   Canada 20-1 (10)
10. **SAM SOLIMAN**
    Australia 27-7 (9)

WELTERWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: CORY SPINKS
St. Louis, MO 34-2 (11)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico 30-4 (21)
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 32-2 (23)
3. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 34-0 (26)
4. **MICHELE PICCIRILLO**
   Italy 43-2 (27)
5. **MANUEL GOMEZ**
   Mexico 26-10-1 (19)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
   Reading, PA 24-0 (22)
7. **JAWAID KHALIQ**
   England 23-1-1 (13)
8. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
   Argentina 40-9-6 (12)
9. **TEDDY REID**
   Adelphi, MD 22-6-1 (16)
10. **COSME RIVERA**
    Los Angeles, CA 27-7-2 (19)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU
Australia 30-1 (24)

1. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 55-3 (31)
2. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ 38-6 (29)
3. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
   Brooklyn, NY 24-1-1 (16)
4. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI 32-0 (21)
5. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 21-0 (17)
6. **RICKY HATTON**
   England 37-0 (27)
7. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
   Washington, D.C. 28-3-1 (16)
8. **OKTAY URKAL**
   Germany 34-2 (10)
9. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
   Australia 39-7-1 (25)
10. **JESSE JAMES LEIJA**
    San Antonio, TX 47-6-2 (19)

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOSE LUIS CASTILLO
Mexico 50-6-1 (45)

1. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Sacramento, CA 39-2 (32)
2. **JUAN LAZCANO**
   El Paso, TX 33-3-1 (25)
3. **JULIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 30-2 (22)
4. **JUAN DIAZ**
   Houston, TX 25-0 (12)
5. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 35-1 (31)
6. **JAVIER JAUREGUI**
   Mexico 48-11-2 (34)
7. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan 37-1 (23)
8. **JULIEN LORCY**
   France 56-3-2 (41)
9. **LAKVA SIM**
   Mongolia 19-4-1 (16)
10. **ISAAC HLATSHWAYO**
    South Africa 20-0 (9)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ERIK MORALES**
   Mexico 47-1 (34)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL 31-2 (19)
3. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico 40-3 (28)
4. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
   Thailand 43-2-1 (35)
5. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
   Bellflower, CA 40-4-1 (24)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
   Argentina 41-2-1 (29)
7. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
   South Africa 29-1 (16)
8. **MIKE ANCHONDO**
   La Puente, CA 25-0 (18)
9. **ROBBIE PEDEN**
   Australia 24-2 (13)
10. **MZONKE FANA**
    South Africa 22-2 (8)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
   Japan 27-3 (18)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 25-0 (24)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
   Nicaragua 22-1 (14)
4. **IVAN HERNANDEZ**
   Mexico 19-0-1 (13)
5. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. 44-4 (28)
6. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea 30-3-1 (8)
7. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 29-1-1 (23)
8. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
   Mexico 26-1 (16)
9. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela 22-5-1 (11)
10. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
    Colombia 31-4-1 (21)

FLYWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 52-2 (28)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
   Venezuela 24-0 (17)
3. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 29-0 (22)
4. **MZUKISI SIKALI**
   South Africa 29-4-2 (17)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 16-0-2 (10)
6. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua 33-2-2 (21)
7. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Australia 21-0 (16)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
   France 16-0 (6)
9. **HUSSEIN HUSSEIN**
   Australia 25-1 (19)
10. **LUIS MALDONADO**
    Mexico 29-0 (21)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 37-3-1 (27)
2. **VICTOR BURGOS**
   Mexico 37-13-3 (22)
3. **BEIBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia 29-3 (23)
4. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico 21-1-2 (12)
5. **PICHIT SIRIWAT**
   Thailand 30-2 (14)
6. **FAHLAN SAKKREERIN**
   Thailand 50-4-2 (20)
7. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia 35-3 (21)
8. **ULISES SOLIS**
   Mexico 14-1 (10)
9. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
   Panama 17-1 (14)
10. **HUGO CAZARES**
    Mexico 18-3-1 (14)

STRAWWEIGHTS

Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
   Japan 16-1-3 (8)
2. **EAGLE KYOWA**
   Japan 13-0 (5)
3. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
   Indonesia 49-7-3 (21)
4. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 34-2-1 (29)
5. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 32-2-1 (20)
6. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela 20-3-1 (10)
7. **IVAN CALDERON**
   Puerto Rico 20-0 (4)
8. **JUAN LANDAETA**
   Venezuela 15-2-1 (13)
9. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 50-2-3 (17)
10. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
    Mexico 22-6-3 (11)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

STILL GLITTERING

One of the lamest of all sports cliches is one that was probably first uttered during a javelin competition at Olympia in 449 B.C., when one spectator turned to another and said, "You know, Aristotle, it's a shame that one of these guys has to lose." Truth be told, it's quite often not a shame that one guy has to lose. Especially if that guy is (in no particular order of personal loathing) Saddam Hussein, Roy Jones, Barry Bonds, or any baseball player wearing a pair of red sox.

On September 18, though, the words actually rang true when Bernard Hopkins and Oscar De La Hoya stood right in each other's faces and gave boxing a night of which it could be proud. It wasn't a great fight from an excitement or technical standpoint, nor was it worth the outrageous $54.95 price tag. (Except for Ali vs. Louis, what would be?) But it was a nine-round reminder of how boxing, which never goes very long without disgracing itself in some way, never goes very long without providing yet another example of the grace, character, and pride of its warriors.

With a one-punch knockout of a superstar who'd never been stopped before, Hopkins showed that any speculation about his losing interest or skills on the brink of his 40th birthday is just plain wishful thinking by the Antonio Tarvers and Howard Eastmans of the world. Like the aforementioned Bonds,

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Ryan was impressed with the performances of both Hopkins and De La Hoya

Hopkins not only shows no signs of decline, but in some ways actually seems to be getting better. In case that earlier line slipped past you, let me emphasize again that Hopkins is 39! Marvelous Marvin Hagler was slipping at 32.

Hopkins was impressive in victory. (Yes, despite analyst Larry Merchant's stubborn refusal to acknowledge anything that Hopkins did right during the pay-per-view telecast, "The Executioner" fought a smart, patient, measured battle. By the way, you get the impression that had Hopkins single-handedly captured Osama Bin Laden that night, Merchant would have pointed out that the Philadelphian didn't move in for the finish fast enough and should have been able to duck the Bin Laden haymaker that caught him as he was first entering the dark cave.) And in defeat, De La Hoya, made me a lifetime fan.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

With Merchant and the HBO cameras moving in, Oscar was all man

There's a tendency to overhype everything. A paper champ climbs in weight these days and he's quickly compared to greats who won multiple crowns. In many cases, though, the guy moving up isn't meeting the best fighter in the higher weight class. So in essence, his real challenge is more the new weight class than it is his opponent. (Think Roy Jones vs. John Ruiz.) That wasn't the case with De La Hoya. He went after not just the undisputed middleweight champion, but also the pound-for-pound king and a first ballot Hall of Famer. It's what Ray Robinson, Ray Leonard, or Tommy Hearns would have done. That's no small compliment.

If De La Hoya motored around the ring in the late stages of his decision "defeat" to Felix Trinidad five years to the day before the Hopkins showdown, it only figured that "The Golden Boy" would be on his toes more than the Joffrey Ballet against the stronger, rougher, harder-hitting (at least at middleweight) Hopkins. At the very least, De La Hoya could be expected to avoid standing in front of Hopkins the way the crowd at the Great American Baked Bean Eating Contest avoids standing downwind from the competitors. But to the surprise of everyone, most of all Hopkins, De La Hoya hung right in the trenches and tried to force the issue, even after Hopkins' offensive bursts began finding their target. It earned De La Hoya the first three rounds on my card and, more importantly, The Executioner's respect.

"He didn't run," Hopkins would say afterward. "I give him a lot of credit. He didn't look for a gift from the judges."

Said De La Hoya the day before battle, "I'm not afraid because Hopkins spent time in jail. When we get in that ring it will be just me and him."

De La Hoya's offense wasn't spectacular, and it was clear that he was merely hoping to steal rounds with the occasional flurry or well-timed combination, as Leonard had against Hagler in 1987. But no one training The Golden Boy, not even Evel Knievel, would have advised more recklessness, especially against a rock-jawed master counterpuncher like Hopkins. Instead of retreating or making like a turtle whenever Hopkins punched, De La Hoya fired back. Sure, Hopkins seemed unusually tentative and respectful, as Merchant just loved pointing out, but it was because De La Hoya forced him to be.

Far from the one-sided spanking some pundits expected, the fight was actually quite competitive (De La Hoya led by two points on one card at the time of the stoppage and trailed by only a point on mine). It was after the rosin had settled, however, after De La Hoya had been writhing on the floor and pounding that same canvas in frustration, that he showed why he's so difficult to dislike. He didn't flee to the sanctity of the dressing room, but instead stayed in the ring and waited to be interviewed.

Given the chance to use his cut hand as an excuse, he declined. Asked by Merchant if he'd like to watch a replay of what had been the most heartbreaking moment of his amateur or pro career, an image that was probably about as appealing to him at that moment as a Rosie O'Donnell nude scene, he agreed without hesitation. De La Hoya gave Hopkins nothing but praise, and said, "He threw a good bodyshot that caught me. What can I say? I tried to do the impossible on paper."

More so than suffering four defeats in his prime (two of which were judging screw jobs), failing to do the impossible is what will keep De La Hoya from entering that class of Leonard, Hearns, and Roberto Duran. He's unquestionably a notch below. Still, there has to be some kind of elite neighborhood for him to call home, a place where guys who are dubbed "superstars" or "golden boys" or "throwbacks" actually try to live up to those labels by fighting every tough guy they can find, then stay awake at night thinking of new ways to take risks and confound the experts.

Don't pound the canvas, or anything else, in frustration, Oscar. Just pound yourself on the back for a nice job. You made Bernard Hopkins uncomfortable, which doesn't happen very often. And you made some of us, who'd once considered you an example of the gallant warrior every fighter should strive to be, comfortable again. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

HEAVYWEIGHTS: THE SORROW AND THE PITY

Everybody's been saying for years now that the heavyweight division is in bad shape, and everybody's been right. But these days I'm not sure it even has a pulse. Someone should draw a chalk mark around the whole thing, take photos from all angles, and call the wagon.

When I say this division is bad, I don't mean it's bad in a hip-hop sense. I mean it's bad like when you find a mysterious food container way back in the fridge, open it to investigate, and right away you say, "*Ugh*. This stuff is bad! What is it?" I'll tell you what it is. It's the heavyweight division.

As I write this, Don King controls 2½ out of 3½ of the "world" alphabet titles (the WBO belt counting for half as much as the others). One of King's awful schemes is to pull Evander Holyfield out of storage so he can challenge THE RING's number-10 ranked heavyweight, Lamon Brewster, for his third-rate title (assuming Holyfield gets past the dreadful Larry Donald first). And after the winner is announced, King will call him a world champion. That's like saying the victor of a chili cook-off between two guys in Nowhere, Montana, is the world's finest chef.

I'm so sick of columnists writing that Holyfield should retire that I'll skip all that and go on to Brewster. Brewster only retains his seedy little title because he defeated a Wladimir Klitschko who says he was attacked by mysterious, invisible forces, and then two judges out of three gave him a Don King decision over the limited Kali Meehan.

It seems like whenever I drop into the L.A. Boxing Club, I see Brewster working diligently on a bag or something, and everybody in the place is talking about how hard he can hit. But when he gets in a fight, he falls asleep. I don't mean someone hits him and puts him to sleep. I mean he's just not interested. He seems to think all you need to get a victory is to wait for it to drop down from the sky. And maybe he's right, when you consider that decision over Meehan.

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DKP

Holyfield, King, and Donald: Everything that's wrong with the heavyweight division

It's like the heavyweight division is getting stabbed and shot at the same time. First, the talent, for the most part, just isn't there. Second, King makes things worse by taking the drab stew that makes up the top of the division and mixing it together into almost inconceivably terrible combinations.

Southpaw Chris Byrd, ranked number-one contender behind champion Vitali Klit-

schko, uses a goofy style that's apparently designed to send fans to the exits. Pawing at the other guy over and over with his right glove, he abhors genuine punching. He should not be a fighter. As for Vitali, he's a gutsy, determined champ. But let's face it, James Toney is on to something: Both Klitschkos *do* move a little like Frankenstein's monster. Little Joe Louis running a fever of 104 would eat them both for breakfast at one sitting and go back to bed.

I know I pick on number-two John Ruiz a lot—maybe even more than Byrd—but the fact is, before every fight Ruiz tells us how he's going to punch this guy's lights out and that he really trained hard for this one, and then he climbs into the ring and wrestles for the entire contest. If Ruiz actually were the undisputed champion—and that's not impossible in this sickly division—the last fight fan would have to turn out the lights and go watch golf with everybody else.

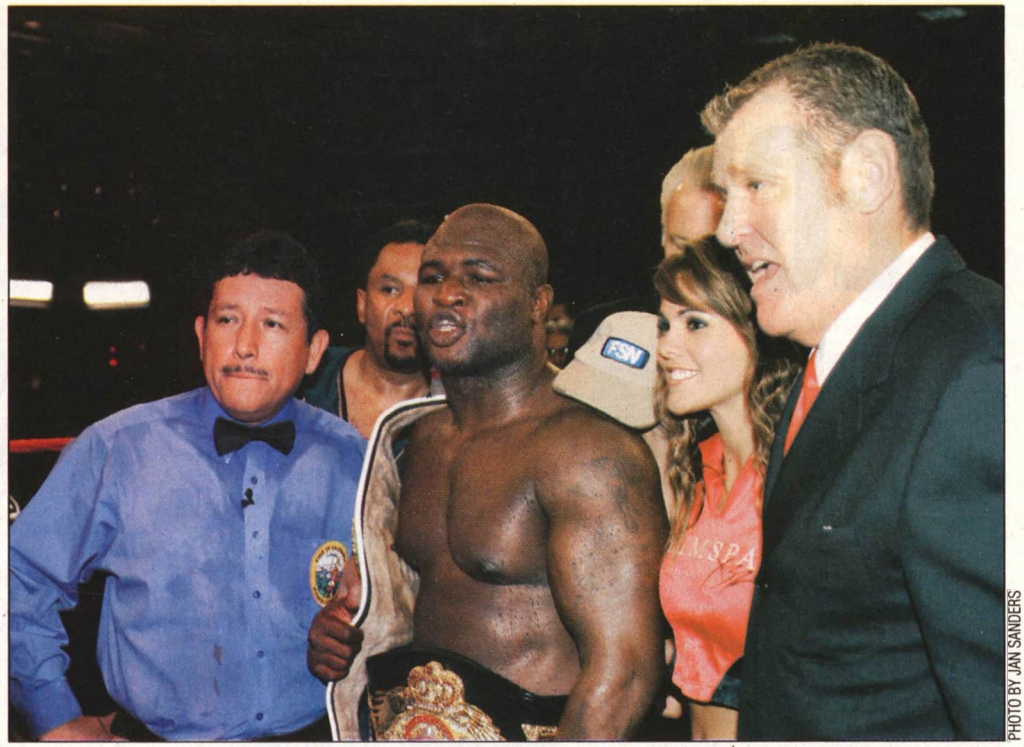


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Toney might save the division, if he can get healthy

Number three Toney is the best in the division. He hits without being hit, he doesn't run, he's fun to watch, and when he gets tagged it never seems to hurt him. But he tore his left biceps against Rydell Booker and is sidelined for months again on the heels of his Achilles tendon injury that also sidelined him for months. Let's face it: At age 36, Toney's short-term and long-term health are question marks.

Number four Hasim Rahman is one of the most hot-and-cold fighters out there. At 32, he shouldn't be used up. But I lost all faith in him when in his 2001 rematch with Lennox Lewis he leaned back with both gloves sticking out in front of him like he wanted Lewis to inspect them. To me, that one moment erased just about everything he ever accomplished in the ring. Naturally, Lewis did the logical thing and knocked him out. I've never seen a move quite so amateurish in a professional boxing match. Fact is, I've never seen it in the amateurs either.

Number five Monte Barrett lost to Lance Whitaker and Joe Mesi. Not promising. But give him credit for this: When Wladimir stopped him in seven, Barrett may have gone down five times, but he also got up five times.

Number six Andrew Golota, who once showed plenty of talent, is tied with unranked Oliver McCall for exhibiting the screwiest behavior in a heavyweight ring since Fan Man dropped in on the 1993 bout between Holyfield and Riddick Bowe. But what puts Golota out of contention is the fact that he's a quitter. Hitting Bowe what seemed like 106 times below the belt in two fights was a way to quit. He also quit against Michael Grant. Against Lewis, he put up about as much resistance as the French infantry.

When I first noticed Fres Oquendo was number seven, I figured it was probably a typographical error. But on further consideration, poor Fres did actually get the best of snorifying Byrd on Native American land in Connecticut and then got utterly jobbed in a unanimous decision that was almost as amazing as the legs on Catherine Zeta-Jones. His loss to big hitter David Tua in 2002—when Tua could still move a little—is excusable, and his failing to outwrestle Ruiz is also understandable. That accounts for all three of his losses. Oquendo got past required warhorses such as Bert Cooper and David Izon, and the fact is, in this bunch, old Fres is looking better every moment. Or maybe everybody just looks better nearer to closing time.

Number eight Jameel McCline froze like a Popsicle against Wladimir Klitschko in December 2002 and hasn't done much since. Part of his inactivity is explained by bad luck. A bout with Toney was scratched because of Toney's Achilles injury. But if you see McCline as a champion, you see something I don't see.

We already discussed number 10 Brewster, so that leaves only Danny Williams, who, it's true, defeated a one-legged Mike Tyson. But he also was outpointed by Julius "Advertisements On The Bottoms Of My Shoes" Francis in 1999, when Francis already had seven losses on his record.

If I could do only one thing to try to save this corpse of a division, it would be to force King out of the heavyweight business and turn him into a Hollywood agent. Sure, he'd be annoyed at first, but in no time at all he'd thank me.

King would make a fortune putting together bad actors and lousy scripts and no doubt win tons of Academy Awards for his projects. After all, Oscar winners are decided by the judges, right? Can't you visualize Jimmy Lennon Jr. opening the envelopes and announcing the outcomes? You can almost hear the stunned silence … then the booing. ■

PECHANGA RESORT & CASINO

IF YOU GO

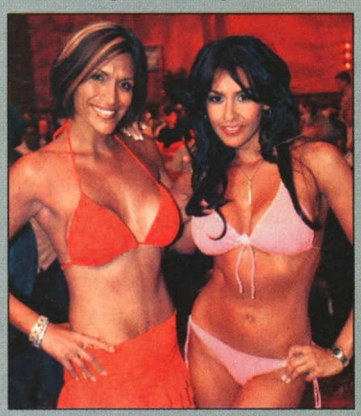
Location: 45000 Pechanga Parkway, Temecula, CA 92592; phone: 1-877-711-2WIN; Web site: www.pechanga.com

Directions: From Los Angeles area, take I-10 or CA-91 east to I-15. Go south on I-15, exit at CA-79 toward Indio, and turn left at end of ramp onto CA-79. Turn right onto Pechanga Parkway, then turn right into casino. From San Diego area, take I-15 north to CA-79 toward Indio and follow directions above.

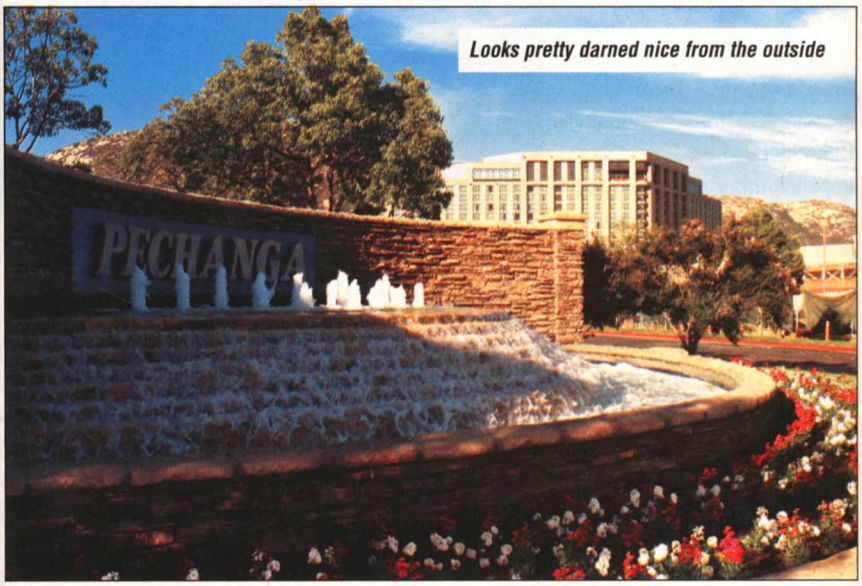
Tickets: Prices vary, depending on the show. For Toney vs. Booker, they ranged from $75 to $200. Call main number for tickets—in advance. Sellouts are not uncommon here.

Who to look out for: Toney-Booker was attended by Thomas Hearns, Vassiliy Jirov, Manny Pacquiao, and Pete Rose, among others. Be alert. L.A. is full of famous faces, many willing to drive 100 miles of Interstate highway to see good fights.

Advice to greenhorns: The moment you look away, expect a kayo; there are no big screens to show instant replays. Also, park in the garage. It's free. And here's an important fact to know: Old maps show Pechanga Parkway as Pala Road. Some genius changed the name.



The between-rounds eye candy at Pechanga isn't bad



Looks pretty darned nice from the outside

By Ivan Goldman

PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

The first thing the Pechanga Resort & Casino has going for it is that it isn't the older, more primitive Fantasy Springs Casino down the road in Indio. There they set up a ring in the desert sand, put some chairs around it, and call it a boxing venue.

But Pechanga, which of late has been attracting more fight cards, is the most Las Vegas-like casino-hotel complex in Southern California. It boasts pleasant, well-scrubbed facilities with more than 500 guest rooms and suites. Amenities include a fitness center, Jacuzzis, a decent pool, and seven restaurants, ranging from a steakhouse, to Italian and Asian fare, to a 24-hour diner. Vegas-like Pechanga even has a 1,200-seat showroom that attracts acts such as Dana Carvey and The Four Tops. A barnightclub sits on top of the hotel.

The ring itself is set up in an air-conditioned ballroom that seats 3,000. Though seats aren't elevated to provide better visual access toward the back, even the last row is close enough to the ring that no one feels cheated.

Unlike Native-American casinos in Connecticut, Florida, and other states, Pechanga and the other tribal casinos in California don't form their own rinky-dink boxing commissions. They hire the state commission to supervise bouts. This guarantees the safety measures that fighters deserve. After James Toney decisioned Rydell Booker at Pechanga, he went out of his way to sing the resort's praises. It must be doing something right.

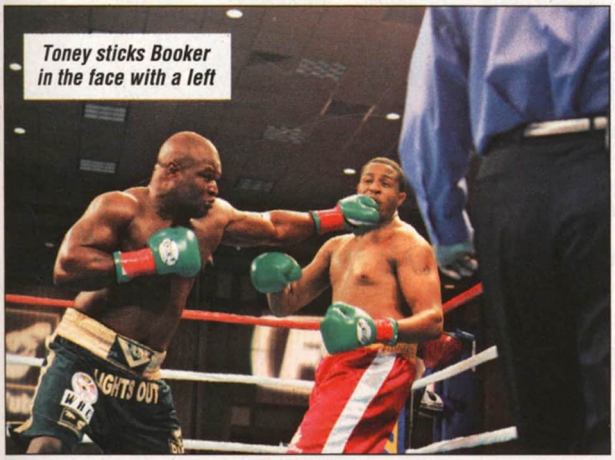
Although tribal casinos can get around the tough no-smoking ban that applies in most public places in California, Pechanga won't allow smoking in its ballroom. That's

Pechanga fans are on their feet at the start of the Toney-Booker fight

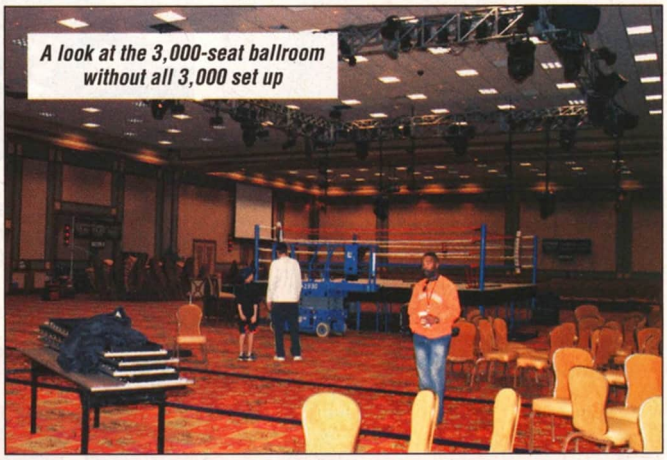
another plus for fighters, whether participating or just watching. Precision athletes who work hard to stay in shape don't enjoy breathing second-hand smoke. An exception might be celebrated smoker Ricardo Mayorga, whose shocking, third-round kayo of Vernon Forrest took place at Pechanga.

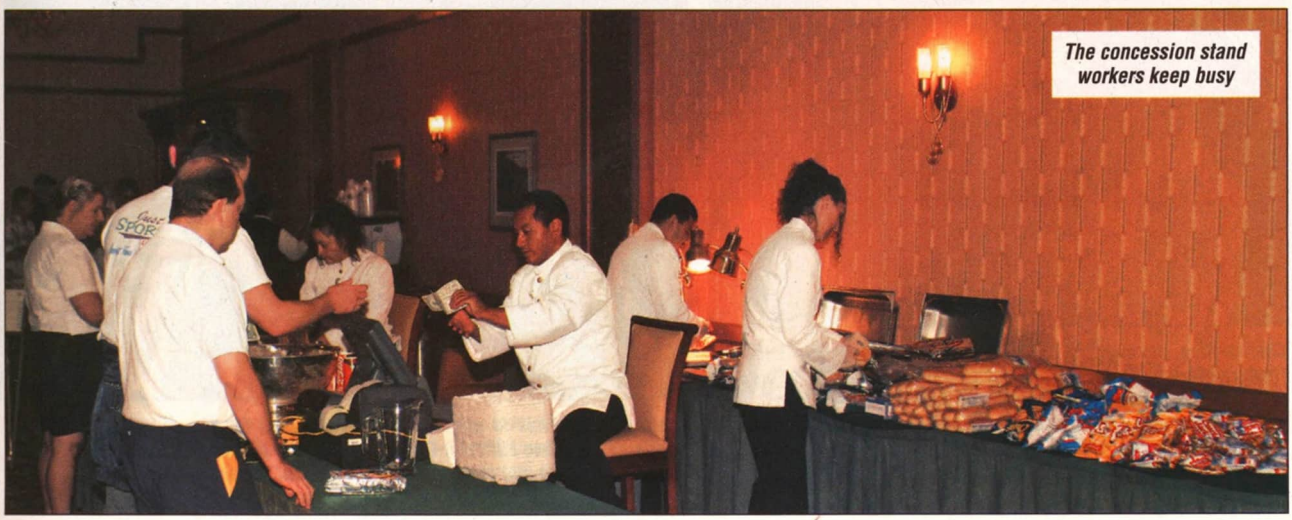
As for the casino itself, it's spread over 88,000 square feet, with smoking and no-smoking areas. (An addition is also being constructed, due to be completed by the start of 2005.) You won't find craps or sports wagering, which are banned by a complicated set of laws. But it has 2,000 slot machines, plus blackjack, poker, and other table games.

It's no secret that the economics of the fight biz have been pushing more and more fight cards out of the big cities and into resort areas. It's tough for an urban venue to compete with a casino that doesn't mind losing at the gate in order to attract gamblers. Since this trend is unlikely to change anytime soon, it makes sense to put resort fights in places like Pechanga, which treats fans with courtesy and respect. ■



Toney sticks Booker in the face with a left


A look at the 3,000-seat ballroom without all 3,000 set up


The concession stand workers keep busy

CAMERA CLICKS

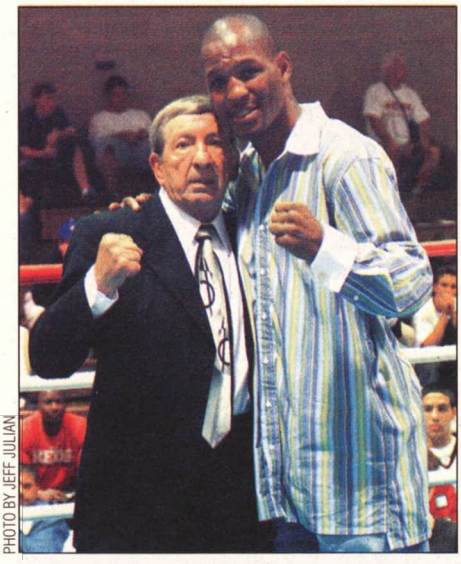


PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN

Two of Philly's finest, referee Frank Cappuccino and middleweight champ Bernard Hopkins, came together in September at a benefit show for Cappuccino's ailing son, Frank Jr. Hopkins donated a signed pair of boxing trunks to be auctioned off. If you'd like to make like "The Executioner" and donate to the cause as well, please call 215-757-3947.

PHOTO BY JOSE JIMENEZ/GETTY IMAGES

Wouldn't it be nice if you were greeted like this every time you came home from work? Felix Trinidad returned home to Puerto Rico to a gathering of thousands after toppling Ricardo Mayorga, standing atop a truck as he cruised the streets of San Juan. It was an appropriate vehicle to ride, since Mayorga looked like he'd been run over by a truck by the time "Tito" got done with him.

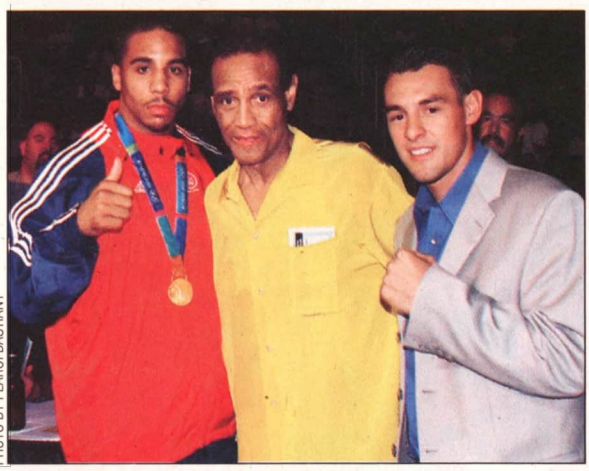


PHOTO BY PEARCI BASTIANY

Charles King, the owner of King's Boxing Gym in Oakland, California (featured in the previous issue of THE RING's "Being There"), poses with two of the Bay Area's brightest prospects, 2004 Olympic gold medalist Andre Ward (who trains at King's) and undefeated featherweight Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero. After seeing what happened when he loaned his gold medal to Roy Jones recently, Ward might want to think about leaving that puppy at home from now on.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Vitali Klitschko has to remember that chest-high for him is not chest-high for everyone. THE RING Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins practically had to get up on his tippy-toes just to see over the heavyweight championship belt he presented to the 6'8" Klitschko at a Las Vegas press conference in September.

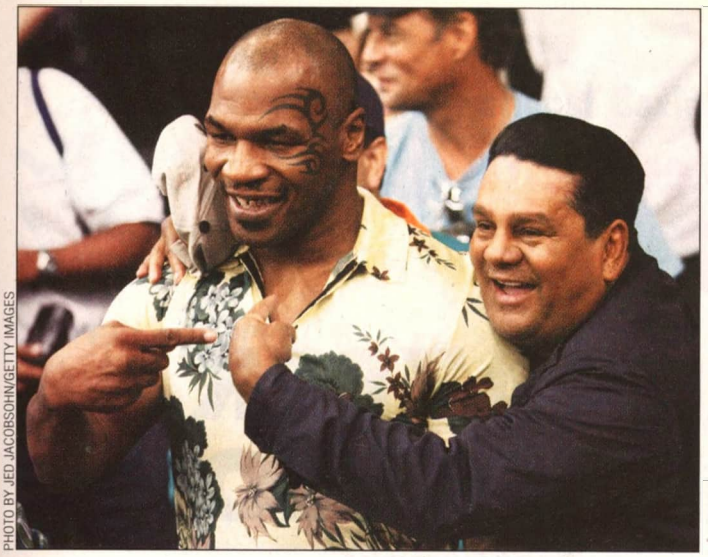


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

"He's heavier!" "No, he is!" Mike Tyson and Roberto Duran go back and forth about who weighs more—although it seems Duran isn't going anywhere except forth when it comes to that topic. The former heavyweight champ and the former lightweight champ-turned-heavyweight hung out together at the Hopkins-De La Hoya fight at the MGM Grand.

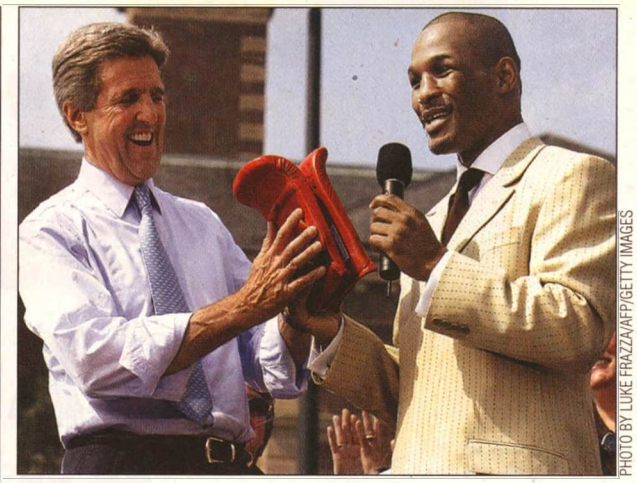


PHOTO BY LUKE FRAZZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry was in the midst of a dogfight in September, so Bernard Hopkins provided him with the appropriate equipment when they met at a campaign rally at the University of Pennsylvania. Thankfully, during all of his debates with President Bush, Kerry held back the urge to use the left hook to the body that Hopkins taught him.

NOSTALGIA CORNER

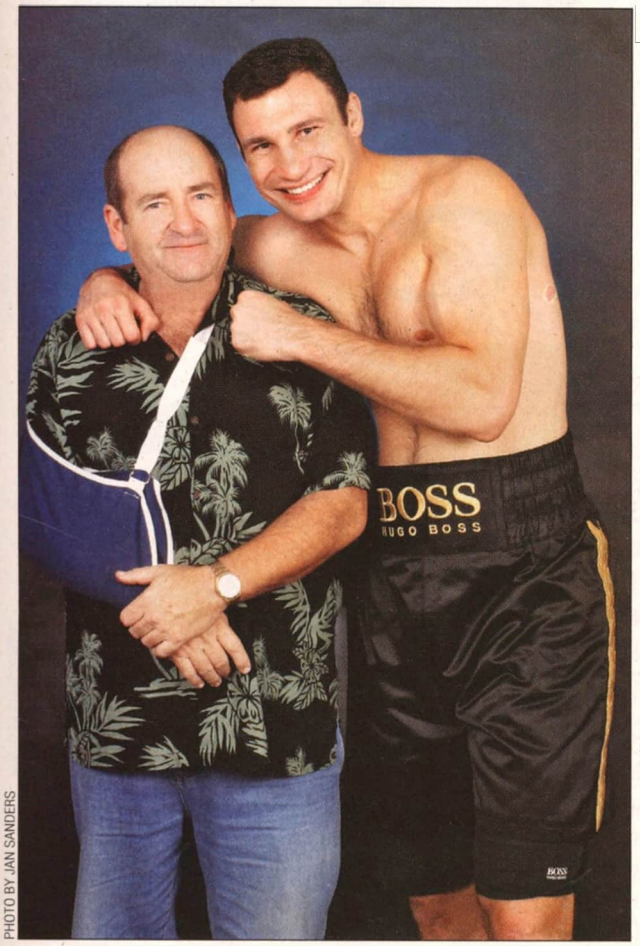
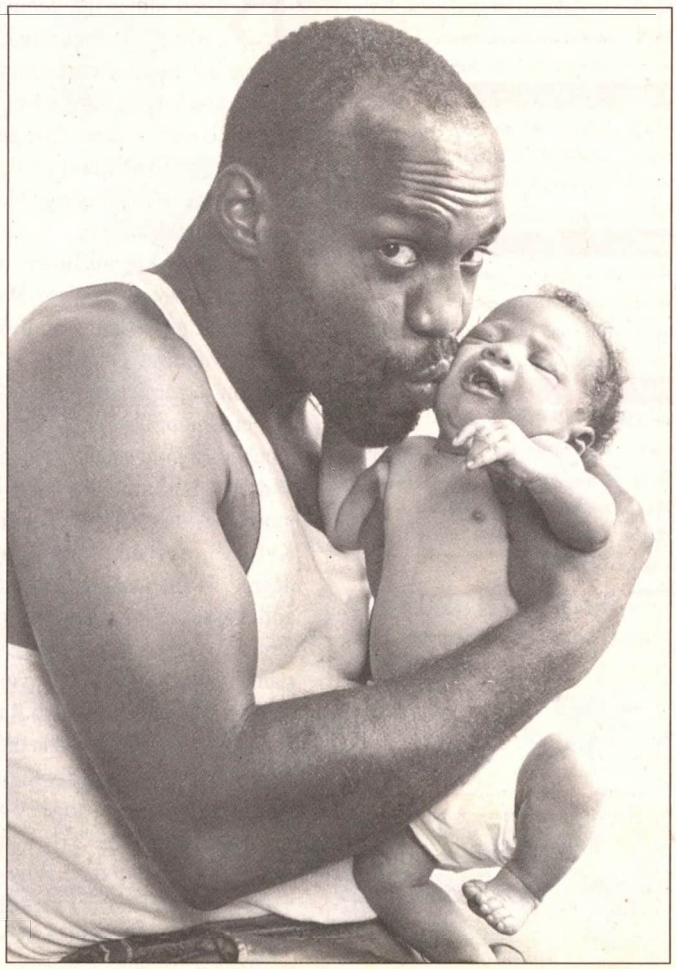


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Photographer Jan Sanders probably wouldn't last 30 seconds with heavyweight champ Vitali Klitschko even in perfect health, but his chances are especially bleak with only one good arm. You'll be happy to know, however, that Klitschko did not inflict the injury upon the likeable lensman—nor did he become agitated when he saw the sling, even though it probably brought back painful memories of Vitali's loss to Chris Byrd.



The Camden Buzz-Softie: Former light heavyweight and cruiserweight king Dwight Muhammad Qawi shows his sensitive side in a tender moment with baby boy Dwight Ibn Muhammad Qawi. We bet Matthew Saad Muhammad wishes Qawi had been this gentle with him.

NEW FACES

ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV

Lightweight

By Joe Santoliquito

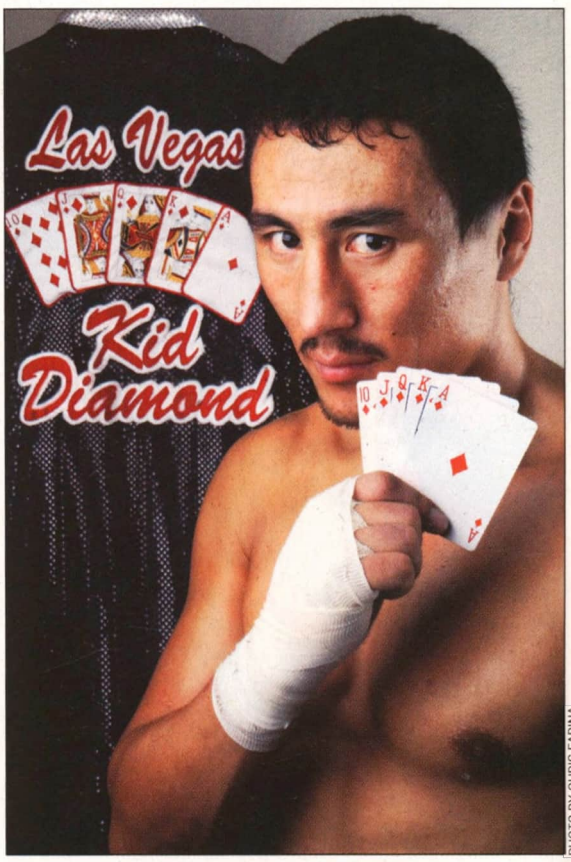


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Boxing rarely discriminates. It often mines the depths and collects the unwanted, discarding the unambitious and rewarding the unrelenting. Take a long look through boxing history. Rare are the great champions who had it easy before making it in boxing. Most of them rose from nothing.

Almazbek Raiymkulov is trying to buck that trend. You see, Raiymkulov had everything: Both of his parents were surgeons back in Kyrgyzstan, a former province of the Soviet Union, now an independent republic slightly smaller than South Dakota. Nicknamed "Kid Diamond" (Almaz means diamond in Kyrgyz), Raiymkulov has a law degree, is fluent in six languages, and possesses the same burning desire that keeps most boxers constantly coming back to the gym.

The first year he boxed, Raiymkulov had to sneak around in order to train without his parents knowing. Had they known what he was up to, they would have asked the same question the 5'7" lightweight prospect constantly hears today: Why bypass a clean, white-collar professional life behind a desk for a life of getting punched in the head?

Boxing just fit.

"I tried a lot of sports growing up," said Kid Diamond, with a slight accent. "I wrestled for two years for the national Kyrgyzstan team when I was 12. I played basketball to get taller. I was the smallest one, end of the line in high school. I wanted to try everything. But I liked boxing. I realized I wasn't getting any bigger when I was 15. That's when I started boxing. I was good. First 100 fights, I didn't lose. I had only 15 losses in almost 300 fights. I was like, wow, I finally found what I liked."

The problem for Raiymkulov was that boxing

(Continued on page 87)

PRO RECORD

2001		
April 27	Adriano dos Santos, Las Vegas	KO 3
May 18	Torrance Brown, Las Vegas	W 4
June 5	Jorge Casas, Las Vegas	KO 2
July 13	Anthony Ojomo, Palm Springs, CA	W 6
Aug. 24	Michael Jamison, Las Vegas	KO 2
Nov. 9	Adam Gonzalez, Palm Springs	W 6
2002		
April 12	Martin Ramirez, Las Vegas	W 6
April 27	Oscar Rosales, Oklahoma City, OK	KO 5
May 11	Alan O'Quinn, Biloxi, MS	KO 2
July 13	Douglas Villarreal, Warren, OH	KO 2
2003		
March 28	Sergio Soto, Las Vegas	W 8
Sept. 12	Juan Angel Macias, Las Vegas	W 6
Nov. 1	Rafael Ortiz, Las Vegas	KO 1
Nov. 13	Pascali Adorno, Glen Burnie, MD	W 8
2004		
March 13	Luis Lizarraga, Las Vegas	W 6
June 5	Raymond Narh, Las Vegas	KO 1
July 31	Ricardo Fuentes, Las Vegas	KO 1
Sept. 18	Jose Luis Soto, Las Vegas	KO 2

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
18	18	0	0	10

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GIANT GOLD GLOVE

$225

Autographed by 25 "Greats"

Arguello ★ Basilio ★ Buchanan ★ Chuvalo ★ Cuevas ★ Dundee ★ Fenech ★ Fullmer ★ Griffith ★ Hagler ★ LaMotta ★ Lopez ★ McGirt ★ Nelson ★ Norton ★ Olivares ★ Ortiz ★ Palomino ★ Pryor ★ Qawi ★ Stracey ★ Tapia ★ Tarver ★ Torres ★ Ward

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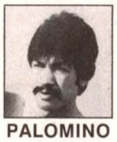
★ Willie Pep
★ Ken Norton
★ Virgil Hill
★ Kid Gavilan
★ Ken Buchanan
★ Alexis Arguello
★ Buddy McGirt
★ Pipino Cuevas
★ Nino Benvenuti
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
★ Carlos Palomino
★ Ricardo "Finito" Lopez
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Dwight Qawi
★ Tommy Morrison
★ Angelo Dundee
★ Johnny Tapia
★ Andrew Golota
★ Livingstone Bramble
★ James "Buster" Douglas
★ Danny "Little Red" Lopez



PALOMINO

WARD

MORRISON

TAPIA

COMBINATION GLOVE

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★ Basilio - Gavilan
★ Basilio - Saxton
★ Basilio - Fullmer
★ Arguello - Pryor
★ Basilio - DeMarco
★ Benvenuti - Griffith

★ Mexican Boxing Greats ★
Olivares, Cuevas, Napoles & Ricardo "Finito" Lopez on Everlast glove

TODAY'S STARS

(single autograph on Everlast glove)

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★ Cory Spinks
★ Acelino "Popo" Freitas
★ Antonio "Magic Man" Tarver

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TRINIDAD SMOKES MAYORGA

BUT CAN HE EXECUTE HOPKINS?

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

By Nigel Collins

The rapturous din that greeted Felix Trinidad's entrance was unlike anything heard at Madison Square Garden since, well, the last time Puerto Rico's favorite son boxed at the fabled arena. Less than an hour later, when Trinidad climbed the ring ropes to celebrate his eighth-round knockout of Ricardo Mayorga, the look on the faces of his near-orgásmic fans was one of unadulterated worship.

They'd waited 29 months for this resurrection, and it was finally at hand. "Tito" had risen from the ashes of defeat and had reclaimed his rightful place among the gods of boxing. And if you listened closely as deafening cheers filled the air, you could hear the *ka-ching* of a cash register in the background, celebrating Trinidad's return just as gleefully as the Tito-maniacs.

With the recent downfall of superstars Roy Jones and Oscar De La Hoya, the entire industry was in urgent need of the sort of economic boost Trinidad clearly provides. There were 17,406 on hand at the Garden the evening of October 2, generating a live gate of $4.65-million, the third highest gross for a fight in MSG history. Moreover, approximately 470,000 households purchased the pay-per-view, adding another $23.5-million to the pot. Just imagine the numbers a rematch with Bernard Hopkins would do.

"Trinidad performed magnificently," said HBO Pay-Per-View's Mark Taffet. "It was an electrifying night that regenerated the sport. Both the 160- and 154-pound divisions just got a lot better, and there are now a number of great fights that can be made thanks to Trinidad's star power."

Trinidad's status among his countrymen is unparalleled. Certainly, many other Puerto Rican fighters have enjoyed tremendous popularity over the years, but none have captured the hearts and minds of the people to quite the same extent. Part of it obviously has to do with his exhilarating fighting style and commitment to excellence, but Tito's man-of-the-people personality and the manner in which he embraces the culture also play major roles.

But you don't have to be Puerto Rican or even Latino to appreciate Trinidad. He's the sort of fighter who never disappoints. Even against Hopkins, he fought his heart out, took his beating like a man, and went down swinging. But it is the mutual love affair between Tito and his fellow Puerto Ricans that has created a unique situation, one that has made him one of the most bankable commodities in the sport.

How long the euphoria lasts will, of course, depend on how much longer Trinidad keeps winning. We all remember what happened after Hopkins knocked him out. There was a lucrative gimme in Puerto Rico eight months later (KO 4 Hassine Cherifi) billed as

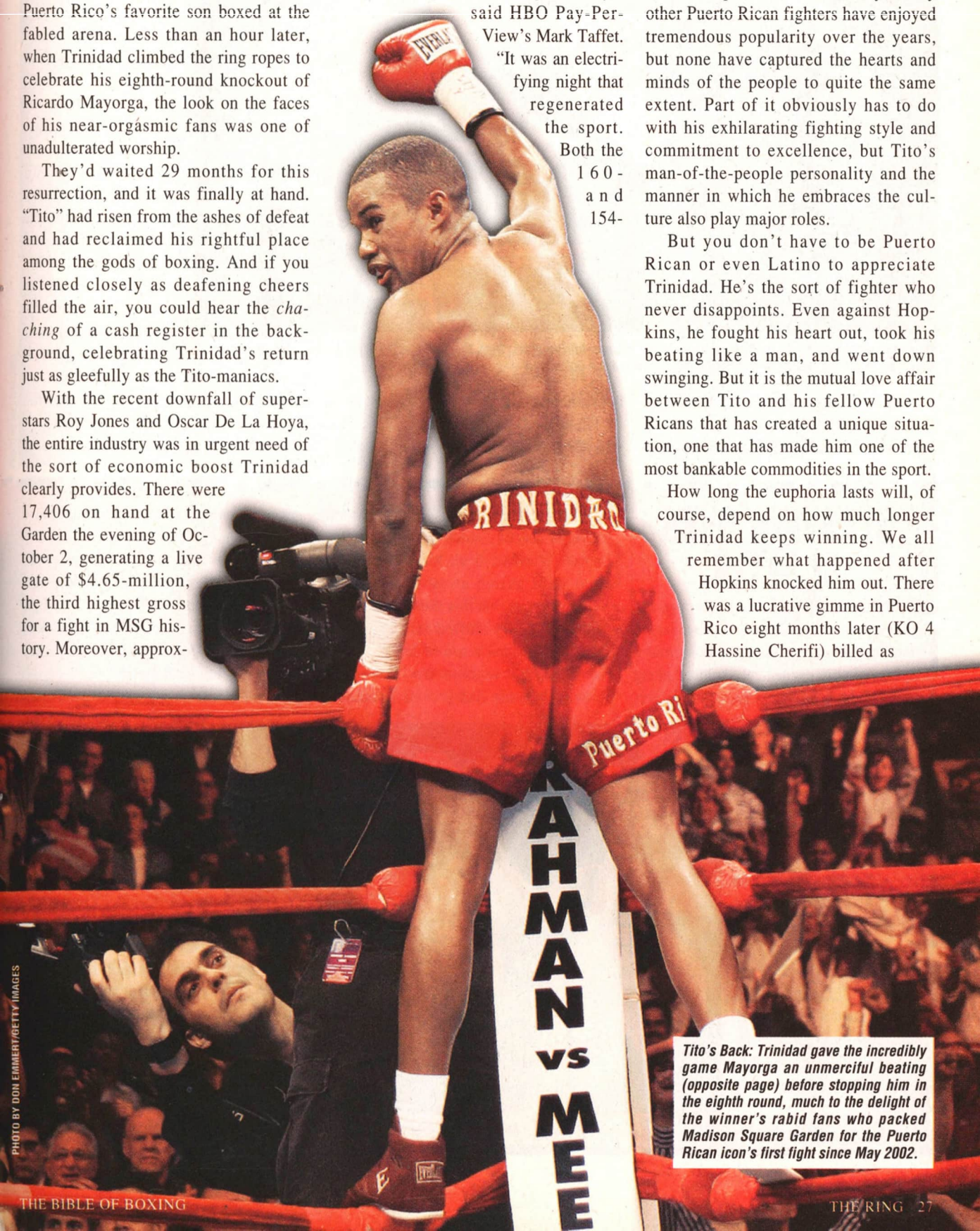


PHOTO BY DON EMMERT/GETTY IMAGES

***Tito's Back:** Trinidad gave the incredibly game Mayorga an unmerciful beating (opposite page) before stopping him in the eighth round, much to the delight of the winner's rabid fans who packed Madison Square Garden for the Puerto Rican icon's first fight since May 2002.*

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mayorga, who showed absolutely no fear of his vicious-hitting rival, took the fight to Trinidad in the early going, and managed to plant a few good punches before Trinidad got untracked.

a prelude to a rematch with Hopkins. But the victory morphed into a farewell fight when, in July '02, Trinidad abruptly announced his retirement.

There were numerous theories as to why Tito stepped away when he did, ranging from an undisclosed injury to a ploy designed to wait out his promotional contract with Don King. And that was just for starters. There were also those who claimed that Trinidad retired because he couldn't get an immediate rematch with Hopkins. Others believed the opposite: that he quit because he knew in his heart of hearts that he could never beat the man who spoiled his perfect record with such brutal finality. But now that Trinidad is back, none of that really matters. What's important is what he does from this point on and with whom he does it.

When asked in the immediate aftermath

STARTING OVER IN STYLE

By the time the opening bell rang, the atmosphere inside Madison Square Garden was that of unrestrained pandemonium. Sparks of pure excitement exploded along with hundreds of flashbulbs as the fighters moved out of their corners and toward one another.

While the vast majority of the crowd was there to witness Felix Trinidad's return to the ring, the scattering of Mayorga fans, bravely waving Nicaraguan flags, had reason to hope for the first two minutes of the fight. Trinidad, always a slow starter, looked understandably tentative following such a long layoff, and Mayorga took the initiative, landing several lefts and rights in the early going.

Things changed quickly later in the round when the 158-pound Mayorga cheekily stuck out his chin and invited Trinidad to hit him. This was a stunt he'd gotten away with against Vernon Forrest, but this time it backfired. "Tito" instantly shifted into offensive mode and planted a trio of left hooks on his opponent's exposed jaw. Mayorga's show of bravado had primed Trinidad's punching pump and he would soon pay a painful price for his impudence.

Trinidad, 157¾, was on target throughout the second round with sizzling right hands to the head. Meanwhile, Mayorga, utilizing his weirdly effective footwork to good advantage, lashed back to keep things competitive.

Trinidad was having another good round in the third, setting up combinations with his left jab, when Mayorga found his head with a lunging right. It wasn't "El Matador's" best shot, but it was solid enough to cause Trinidad to lurch forward and reach down with his glove to steady himself. When the glove touched the canvas, referee Steve Smoger correctly ruled that it was a knockdown. Although it ultimately played no role in the outcome, the knockdown gave Trinidad the touch of vulnerability required to keep what was basically a one-sided fight exciting.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Trinidad rips Mayorga with a left uppercut

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Referee Steve Smoger gives Trinidad a mandatory eight-count in the third round. Although it was a flash knockdown, Tito's right glove did brush the canvas after he fielded a right hand from Mayorga, so the ref's ruling was correct.

of the Mayorga massacre whom he wanted to fight next, Trinidad gave the familiar "We'll have to wait until we have a meeting with Don King" reply.

The crowd at the Garden wasn't anywhere near as circumspect. Chants of "We want Hopkins" thundered through the building as soon as Mayorga had been rendered helpless. It was music to Hopkins' ears. "The Executioner" had made his presence felt throughout the evening, stirring the

Trinidad, who wasn't really hurt, immediately sprang back into action and began to administer a one-sided beating that culminated five rounds later with his first significant victory since he knocked out William Joppy in May '01.

The fourth was close, but Trinidad really unloaded in the fifth, basting Mayorga over and over with flush blows to the head. Most fighters would have gone down and out under such an onslaught, but the rock-jawed Mayorga, who was cut under his left eye, stayed upright and bravely made it through the round.

In the sixth, Trinidad nailed Mayorga with a low blow that landed on the thigh and caused the recipient to turn and limp away. Smoger warned Trinidad and gave Mayorga time to recover. The brief respite seemed to invigorate the underdog, and he managed a productive spurt of punching when action resumed.

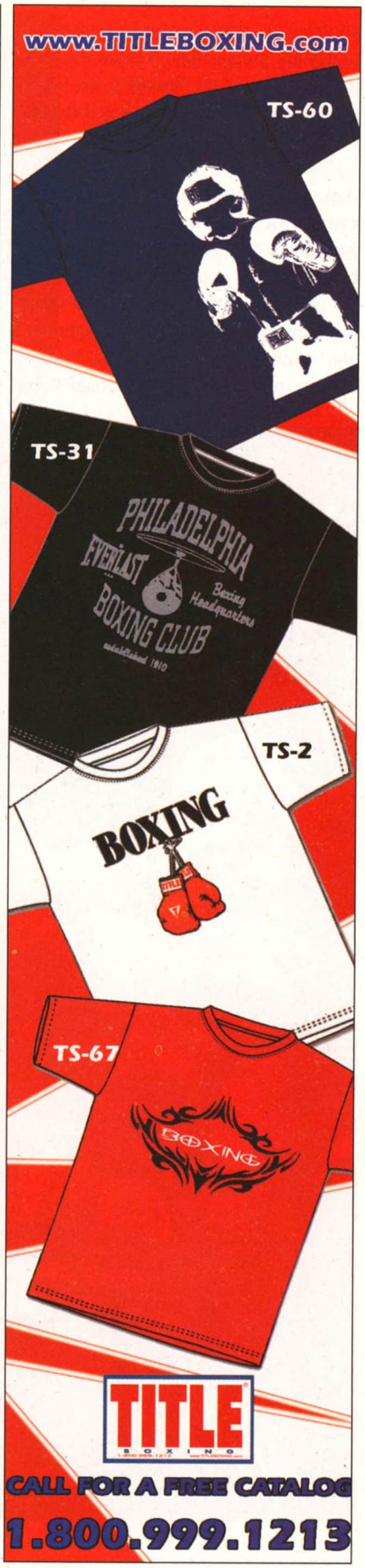
Mayorga also enjoyed a promising start in the seventh, but then Trinidad erupted with a prolonged flurry, punishing his man with both hands. Mayorga mustered one last rally, albeit a weak one, but had already taken such a fierce beating, you couldn't help but admire his grit. There was no dog in this mutt from the slums of Managua.

After belaboring Mayorga's head for most of the fight, Trinidad took a page from Hopkins' book and finally switched to the body in the eighth, sinking a left hook into his adversary's gut that floored him for the first time. As the decibel level threatened to send the Garden roof into orbit, Trinidad finished the job with two more knockdowns.

When Mayorga, 26-5-1 (22), crumbled the third time after absorbing a final combination, Smoger waved the fight off at the 2:39 mark without bothering to count. It was a prudent decision and prompted no protest from the loser or his camp.

"Before this fight there was a lot of doubts," said Trinidad after raising his record to 42-1 (35) and earning a reported $10-million. "But I told Don King I could beat Mayorga, and tonight I did. I feel so happy for this great victory, and you will see more of Tito."

—NC



pot from his ringside seat by flashing his trademark cross-armed X-sign, a menacing reminder of the thrashing he administered the first time he'd shared the ring with the crowd's hero.

"I was a fan. I was jumping up like a jack-in-the-box, just like everybody else," said Hopkins, who knows full well that a rematch with Trinidad is his best chance at another eight-figure payday. He also knows that Trinidad defeating Mayorga was only the first step, and that another return match with Tito can only be made if the promotional minefield can be successfully navigated.

The middleweight champion is a free agent, but Trinidad is umbilically attached to King, who typically demands options on any fighter he allows in the ring with one of his meal tickets. Hopkins is only two fights removed from a contentious contract with King, which he was forced to agree to in order to partake in King's Middleweight World Championship Series. The likelihood of Hopkins working for King again on anything other than a fight-by-fight basis is about as remote as John L. Sullivan regaining the heavyweight title. Even so, when questioned about these difficulties, King left the door ajar, saying, "I'm not going to stand in the way of Tito knocking out Bernard."

Due to his economic clout, Trinidad has other alternatives. He could opt for a rematch with De La Hoya, which might be an even bigger payday than another fight with Hopkins, although that's no longer a certainty now that 'Nard has tarnished much of "The Golden Boy's" luster. Moreover, with Oscar still licking his wounds following his knockout loss,

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Although best known for his potent left hook, Trinidad made excellent use of his right hand against Mayorga, belting the Nicaraguan slugger with it time and again. Moreover, despite his lengthy layoff, Tito showed no signs of ring rust.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Referee Smoger administers the count to a battered Mayorga, who went down three times in the eighth round before being rescued. A vicious left to the body precipitated Mayorga's downfall.

putting together Trinidad-De La Hoya II in the immediate future won't be easy.

Trinidad could fight the winner of the Winky Wright-Shane Mosley rematch, but it wouldn't have anywhere near the appeal of bouts with Hopkins and/or De La Hoya. There's also the possibility that King will milk Tito's popularity with a match against a lesser light, perhaps in Puerto Rico. But Trinidad has a lot of pride, and just as significantly, the self-belief to go along with it. And when you get right down to it, any road that doesn't lead to Hopkins would be a detour unworthy of a fighter of Trinidad's renown.

In order to fulfill his destiny, Trinidad has to fight Hopkins again. Anything less will leave both him and his followers without closure. Even though he risks another humiliation, it is the only path Tito can take and remain true to himself—the path of the warrior. ■

ADORATION FOR EL MATADOR

Before Mayorga left the ring, he looked at a cluster of supporters gathered near his corner and gave a what-are-you-gonna-do shrug. He'd fought foolishly but with tremendous courage, and deserved to exit with his head held high.

Even Trinidad, whom Mayorga had repeatedly badmouthed during the prefight hype, was impressed with the valor and durability his victim had displayed in defeat.

"Mayorga is a really hard fighter; he hits hard and takes a lot of punches," said Tito. "He is very brave."

"I feel good about my performance, but my eye swelled up and I couldn't see some shots," said Mayorga before heading to the hospital for a precautionary checkup.

Mayorga's problems didn't end when the referee saved him from further abuse at Trinidad's hands. He is facing a sexual assault charge back home in Nicaragua.

"I never ran in the ring or in life," said Mayorga. "I will confront this situation because I know I am not guilty."

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Without Mayorga's courage it wouldn't have been such a memorable fight

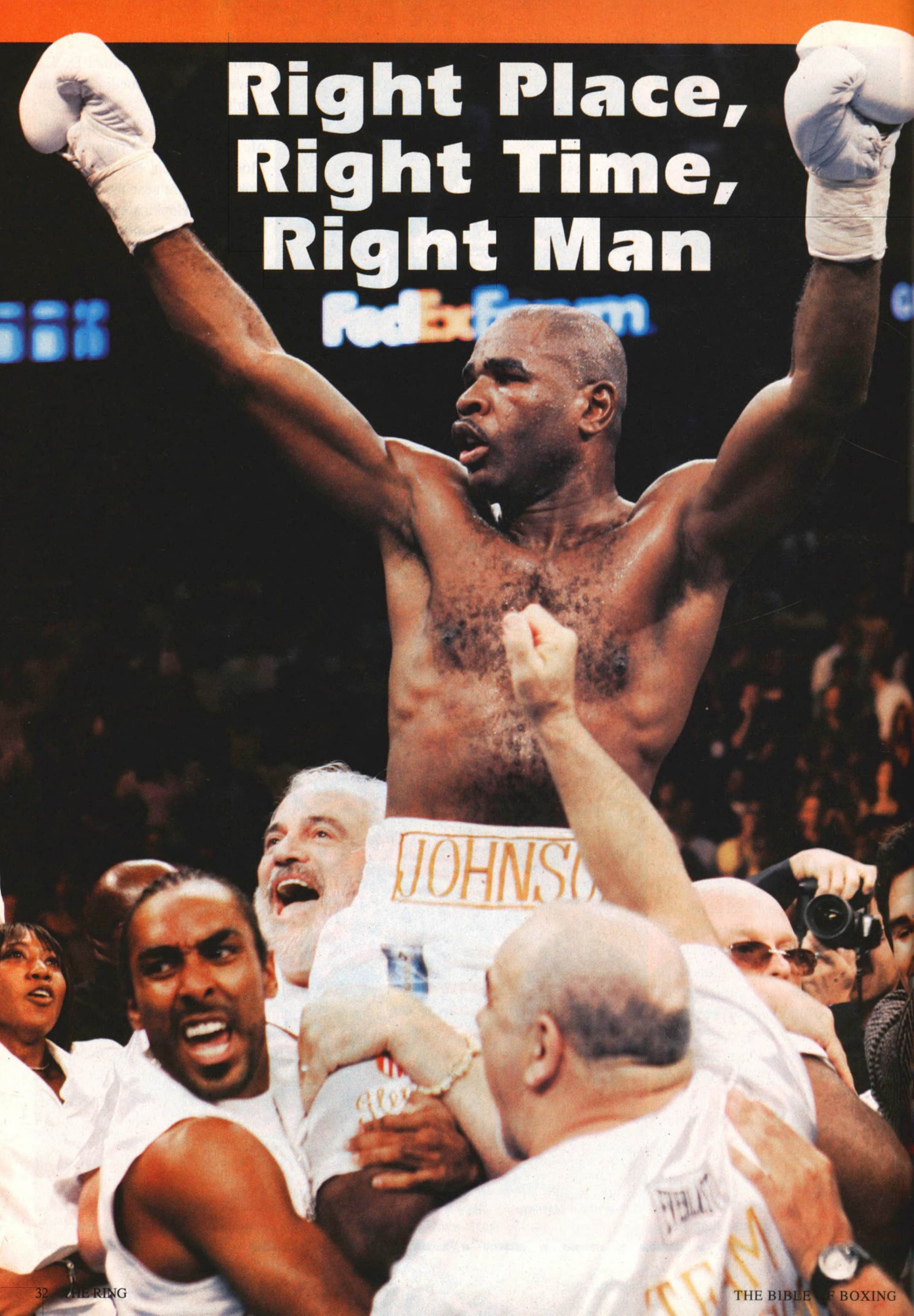
We'll leave that to the Nicaraguan criminal justice system to sort out, but even if Mayorga is exonerated, we still may never see him fight again.

"I will not continue fighting," the 31-year-old Mayorga told the Nicaraguan newspaper *El Nuevo Diario*. "I thought about it and discussed it with my family, so this is serious."

As we know, retirements of this sort, coming so closely on the heels of a crushing defeat, seldom stick. But if the Trinidad fight really was Mayorga's last, he can take consolation in the fact that he made some noise, earned some money (a reported $2.5-million for the Trinidad fight), and won't soon be forgotten. And if most of the memories do fade in the years to come, he'll always hold the distinction of being the first boxer to ever appear on the cover of THE RING with a cigarette in his mouth.

—NC

Right Place, Right Time, Right Man



HOW JOHNSON RUINED ROY'S RETURN

By William Dettloff
PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

It almost was fitting that it worked out the way it did for Roy Jones. Not that he was knocked unconscious the way he was, because whether or not you like him, it's always at least a little unsettling, or should be, to see a fighter in that condition—even one as difficult to like at times as Jones always has been.

What was fitting was that the fighter who put him there, Glen Johnson, is Jones' polar opposite—if not necessarily as a man, because we never really got to know Jones the man, then certainly as a prize fighter and performer. The point is driven home further by the recognition that Johnson didn't just beat Jones, didn't just knock him cold with a single punch; he brought to a striking end the Roy Jones era.

At the end of the fight, polar opposites Johnson and Jones were in polar opposite positions—Johnson lifted high in the air (opposite page), Jones flat on the canvas (below). Partially through hard work and determination, partially through being in the right place at the right time, Johnson pulled off a stunning upset against the most gifted fighter of his time.

Johnson's right hands landed frequently during the fight, until finally one of them turned out Jones' lights in the ninth round. Johnson was comfortably ahead in the fight at the time of the kayo. Two straight kayo defeats may well have ended Jones' career.

It's over. After more than a decade of more or less uninterrupted championship dominance, after obtainment of titles in four weight classes, after years and years of general recognition as the best practitioner on the globe, Jones is done. Make no mistake; despite his typically self-indulgent, mysterious, and non-committal declarations to the contrary a week after the fight, Jones is through as a top fighter and probably as a fighter altogether.

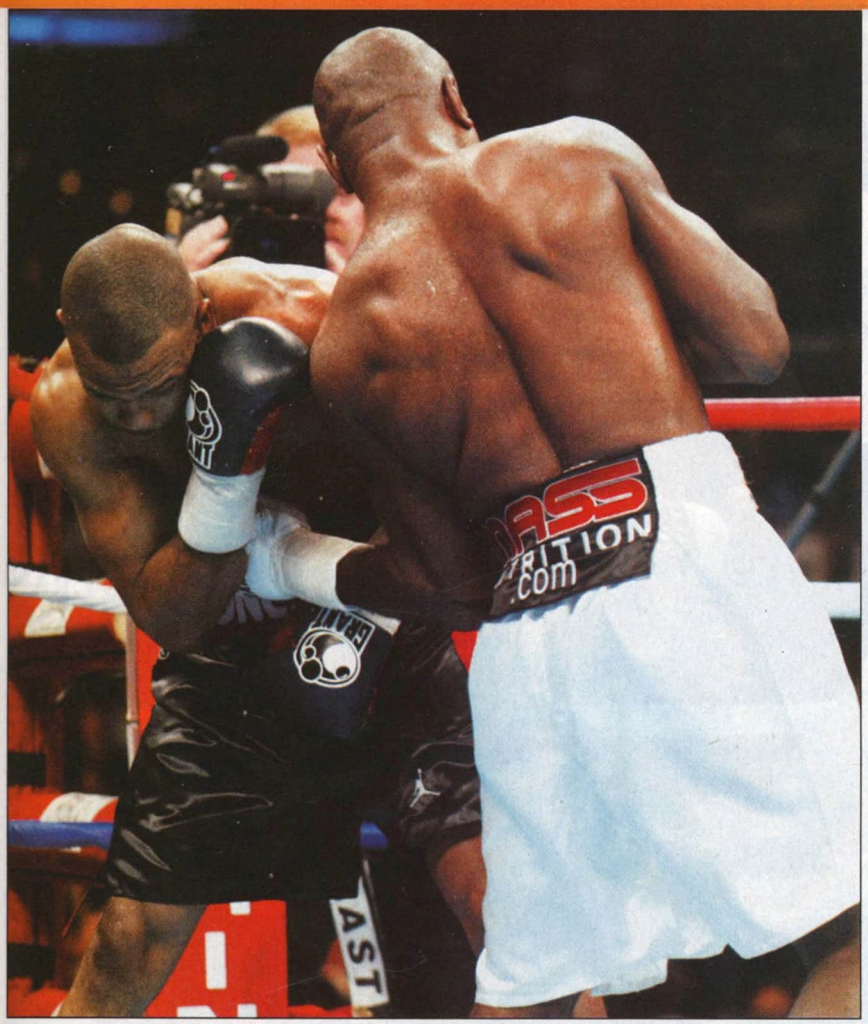
The bloom is well off the rose and the fitting part is that Johnson, a man of sincere modesty and one who never would be caught referring to himself in the third person, a guy who not too long ago lost four straight fights, did it to a man who, until this bout, probably hadn't lost four straight rounds.

The Jones era was ended by a fighter who couldn't get a break when he should have, who never took for granted what he could do in the ring, and, most critically, did not walk away when lesser men surely would have. The bad decisions alone that Johnson has suffered would have forced most out of the gym and into the comfortable banality the rest of us endure. Not Johnson.

"I always believed in myself," Johnson, 41-9-2 (28), told THE RING. "That I was getting ripped off didn't mean that I didn't have the talent or skill; it meant that I was getting ripped off. I spent so much time and effort in this that I cannot just walk away from it. I'm not the kind of person that can live a street life, so I would have to learn another profession. I have responsibilities that I have to take care of. I have kids and all of the bills that come along with trying to live."

You get the sense that Jones never talked that way. Even before the titles, even before the multimillion-dollar HBO contracts, before his ego exploded and he created a blanket of smug isolation between himself and the fight media. That it ended with a loss to Johnson, who said after the fight that he's not the best fighter in the world, merely one who is willing to fight the best fighters in the world, is the nicest kind of symmetry.

You could argue, and some will, that it was Antonio Tarver—who has a lot more in common with Jones, as a performer, than Johnson does—who did it really, and not Johnson. After all, it was Tarver who



The key to the Jamaica-born fighter's game plan was to smother the faster Jones and prevent him from using his long-range skills. Jones, his legs not as fresh as they were in his prime, couldn't do much to avoid thudding bodyshots like this. "The reason he was not throwing a lot of punches was because I wasn't letting him," Johnson said.

pushed Jones seemingly to within a combination or two of losing in their first match in November 2003. And it was Tarver who was the first to lay out Jones with a single shot, when he did it in their rematch in May '04.

But the question must be asked: Who among us wouldn't have given Jones an excellent chance of winning in the rubber match? Who among us was ready to concede with certainty that it wasn't a lucky punch, or that Tarver's odd assortment of physical blessings hadn't conspired to accomplish what no other fighter would or could? And most important, who among us now would give Jones a chance in a third match with Tarver, after seeing what Johnson did? That's the difference. Tarver began the debate; it's his own misfortune that it was Johnson, and not he, who finished it.

The outcome was no great surprise to Johnson, nor was the fact that Jones, 49-3 (38), fought the way that he did. "He was exactly what I thought he would be," Johnson said. "He got off his shots. He worked to get outside so he could get his shots off, but I kept close to him and kept up the pressure. That took him off his game. I needed to go out right away and set an example and let him know that this was the kind of fight it was going to be. I had to make it known loud and clear right away."

Johnson did that, rushing Jones in the first and staying close to him until knocking him cold with an overhand right in the ninth. His activity and work rate had him in the lead on all judges' cards at the end, while Jones appeared passive, even by his standards.

"That's the way he always fights," said Johnson. "The reason he was not throwing a lot of punches was because I wasn't let-

After getting rocked in round five, Jones finally answered back with a fiery combination, but he never managed to hurt Johnson, and soon went back to fighting at a hopelessly measured pace. It was very apparent that Jones was the "older" of the two 35-year-olds.

ting him. He was not comfortable. If I was on the outside, he would have been comfortable and peppering me with combinations. But because I was so close to him, I was shutting him down."

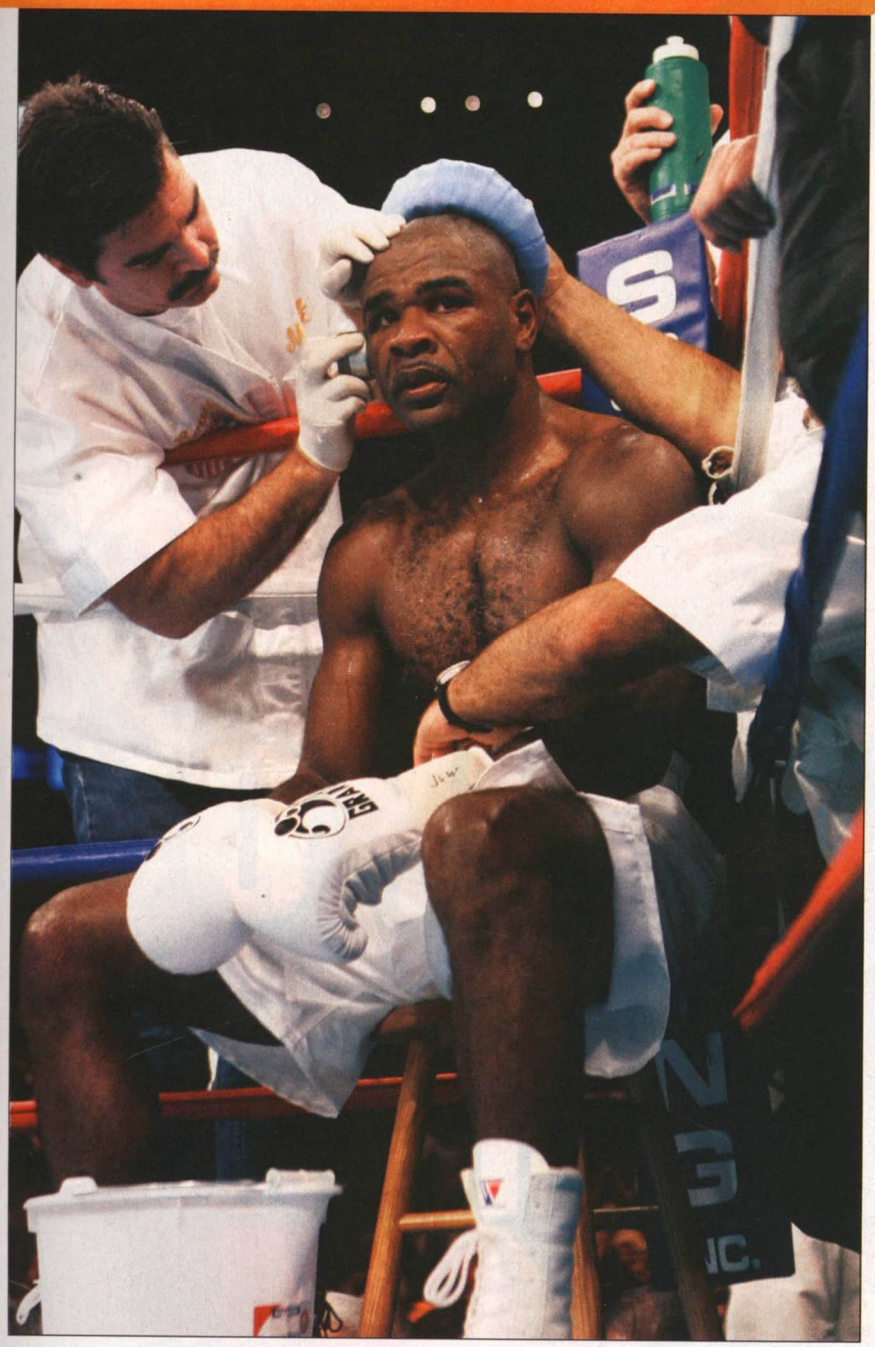
It was and remains a remarkable level of confidence expressed by Johnson, considering where he's been. Regardless of whether Jones had been stopped by Tarver in his previous fight, Johnson was an underdog and he deserved to be. This is a fighter who lost, in consecutive outings, to Sven Ottke, Syd Vanderpool, Silvio Branco, and Omar Sheika. As recently as 2002 and 2003, he dropped decisions to Derrick Harmon and Julio Gonzalez. The pattern isn't recent; after getting stopped by Bernard Hopkins in July 1997, he lost consecutively to Merqui Sosa and Joseph Kiwanuka.

Clearly, not all of Johnson's hardships were borne of scorecards ill-completed and nefarious goings on. There just seemed never to be very much special about him, and it was not until his two battles with Clinton Woods—who was wholly unknown before Jones took him apart two years ago—that Johnson's skills and gumption were taken seriously. It is worth considering that he was getting things done that no one was noticing.

"Johnson's talent is being consistent and steady," said noted trainer and ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* commentator Teddy Atlas. "His talent isn't the kind that we look at a lot these days because we notice things that are very obvious—things like speed and athleticism and power—but there are other kinds of talent that aren't so noticeable, like being consistent and steady, and that's the kind of talent Johnson has."

That particular talent was evident throughout Johnson's big night, particularly in the fifth round. That was when he startled Jones with a right hand high on the head while Jones was trapped in a corner. And Jones, in one of the more impassioned moments of his career, let loose with a blistering combination of blows that Johnson took squarely. Earlier in his career, Jones threw such combinations frequently. Lately, he's only thrown them when he's been desperate, as he was in the last two rounds of the first Tarver fight. But they aren't as effective as they used to be, and Johnson, well, he might as well have been shooing fruit flies from his face.

"He never hurt me," Johnson said.



Johnson's corner goes to work—although there wasn't much work to do on this night. Perhaps the task will be tougher if Johnson secures a shot at Jones' other recent conqueror, world light heavyweight champion Antonio Tarver. For now, at least, Johnson doesn't have to ponder a career change.

"You know going into the ring that you're going to get hit. That's why we do our situps and the roadwork we do—so we can withstand the hard times that come during the fight."

Indeed, Johnson's ability to withstand the hard times during a fight had been proven over the course of his career—not only during the losses, but during the harder wins. And it may be that quality, rather than just Jones' erosion, that precipitated the upset. The criticism that Jones' grit never was really proved throughout his career, that he never really had to display mettle in the way that less gifted fighters must almost from the outset, was valid. But it's a tricky question: Would you rather be ordinarily talented and as a result struggle through a hard business, or be supremely talented and never have to show the grit? Should a fighter be thankful for ability that overwhelms average competition, or wish for tests that force him to stretch?

"When we see so much flash and ability, sometimes we don't see the guy with a critical eye the way we should, and we just say, 'That's extraordinary,'" offered Atlas. "But the competition for Jones was pretty shallow. We were having so much fun looking at this guy with so much ability, but the great fighters always got tested, and Roy never got tested."

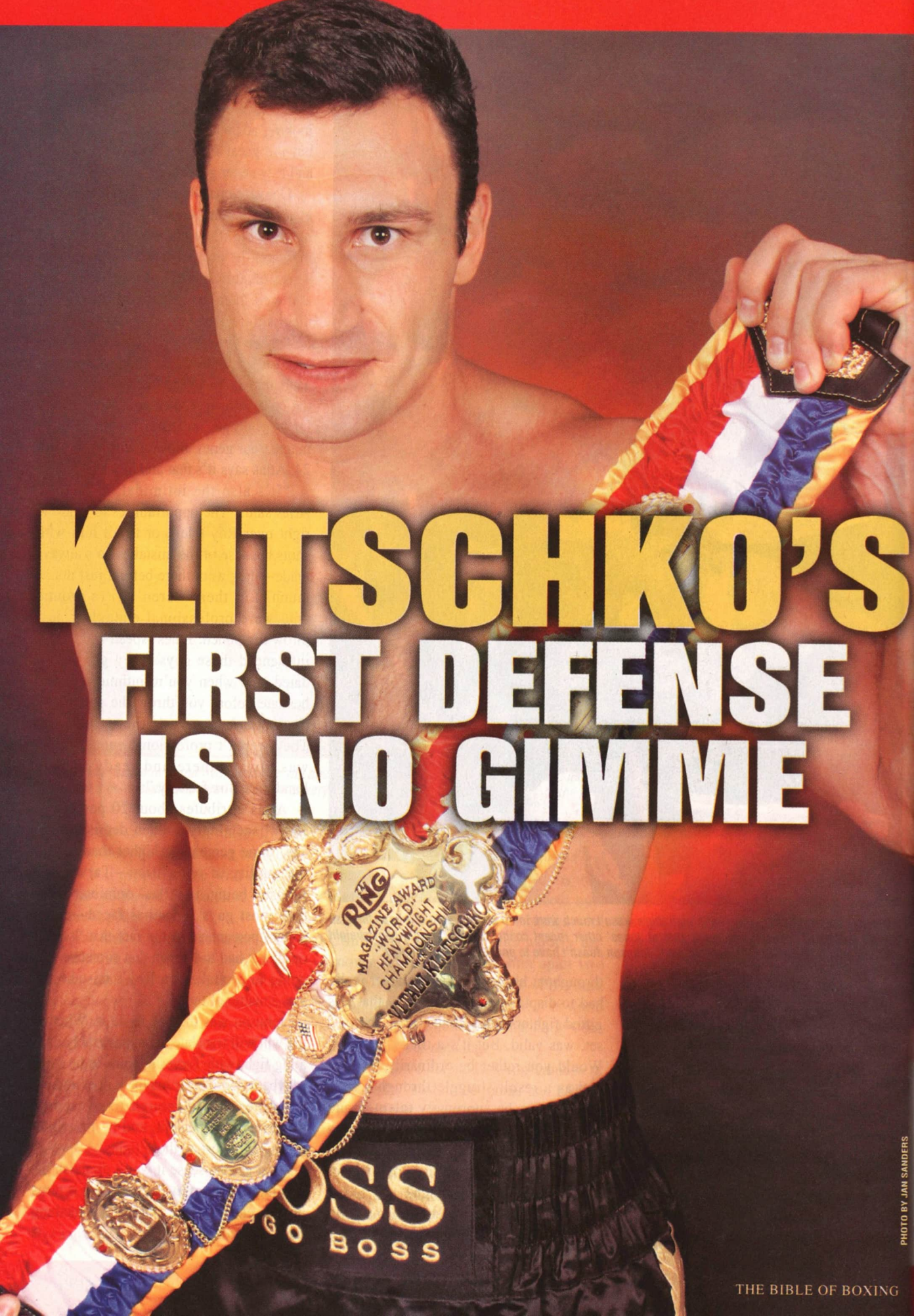
Conventional thinking says that Jones is getting hit and stopped now because, at 35 years old (the same age as Johnson, by the way), he no longer has the speed and sense of anticipation and reflexes that allowed him to get away with the mechanical and fundamental mistakes he's made throughout his career. It's true; one only has to look at the career of Muhammad Ali to see that unless you get the basics down, you're going to get hit a lot as you age, regardless of the kind of magic your genes allowed when you were 24. Atlas says it's that and more.

"It's also the intimidation factor," Atlas said. "The opportunities to land the right over Roy's left, or to hit him with shots because of the mistakes he's always made—they were there before, just not as much. But there weren't guys around who were professional enough to just throw the punch. Jones' speed and ability influenced those guys. They got intimidated, and when you're intimidated, you hesitate before you throw the punch and then the chance isn't there anymore. They weren't professional enough. That was always there and ready to be a Pandora's Box for Roy."

Atlas attributes about 20 percent of Jones' seemingly sudden demise to his age, some percentage higher than that to the quality of opposition—Tarver and Johnson being, in Atlas' opinion, better than most guys Jones has faced—and a certain percentage to the fact that "sooner or later it had to happen that someone was going to capitalize on Roy's mistakes. It was a matter of time."

Johnson was the one to do it. Whether the win will translate, most preferably, into a big fight with Tarver remains to be seen. Maybe it doesn't. Or maybe it does and his steadiness isn't enough to overcome Tarver's greater talent, and he reverts to the guy who lost all those fights.

You get the sense it won't diminish his standing much, even if that's how it turns out. He ended an era, and that's something that stays with you. ■



KLITSCHKO'S FIRST DEFENSE IS NO GIMME

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Can Williams Do To Vitali What He Did To Tyson?

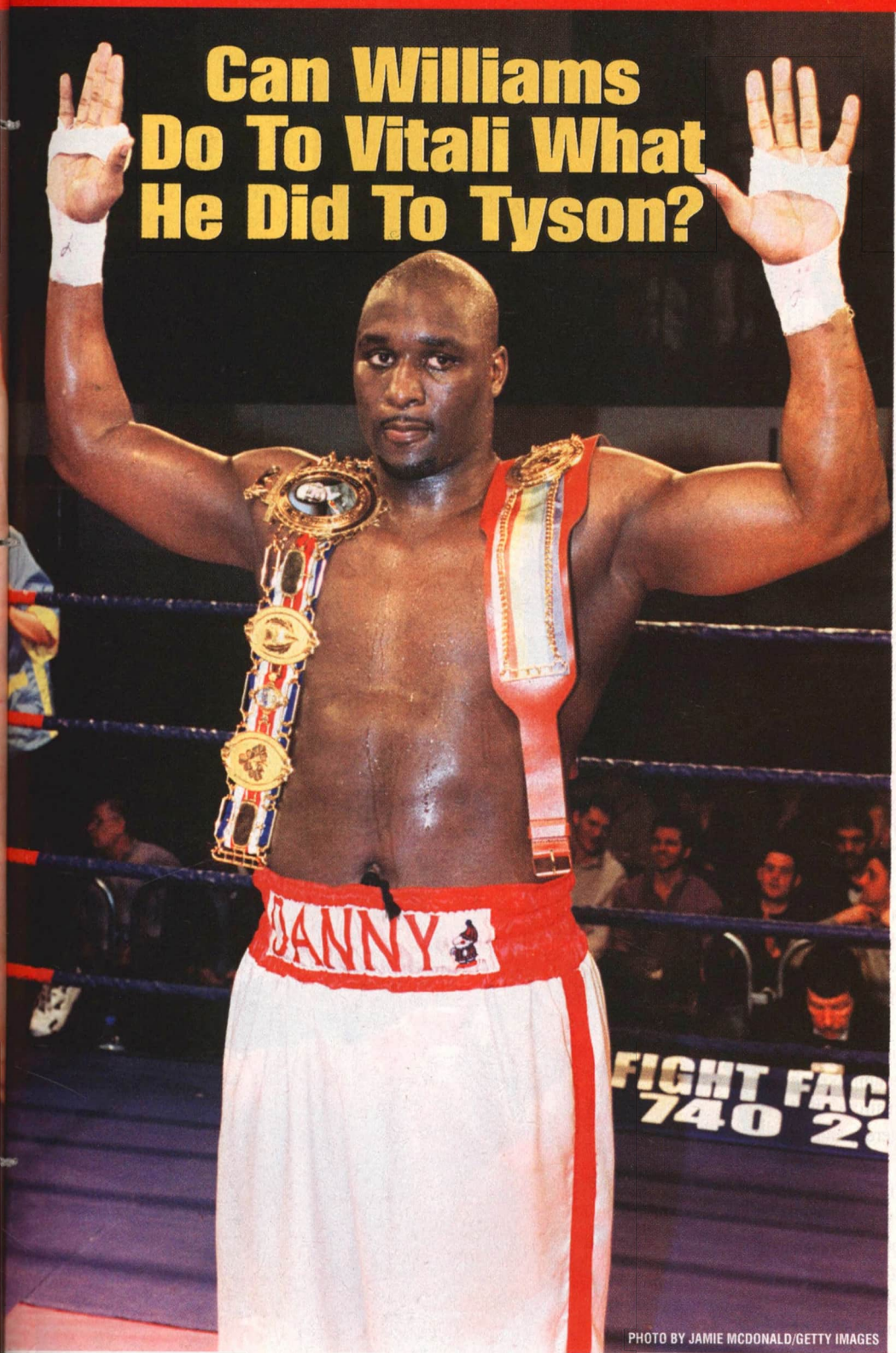


PHOTO BY JAMIE MCDONALD/GETTY IMAGES

Tyson-conqueror Williams (left) has won several regional straps in the past, but is now going after the world championship belt held by Klitschko (opposite page). Despite both being flawed fighters, a fan-friendly punchout is expected when they collide on December 11.

By Gavin Evans

If proposed six months ago, the notion of Danny Williams tangling with Vitali Klitschko would have been considered a bad joke. But a knockout victory over Mike Tyson, even at this stage of Tyson's flagging career, can change a lot of things, and the enigmatic Englishman will indeed challenge world champion Klitschko on December 11 on HBO Pay-Per-View. Stranger still is that in today's depleted heavyweight market, Klitschko-Williams is about as appealing a match as can be made, if for no other reason than the fact that they both won pleasing punchouts in their most recent fights.

Until Williams derailed Tyson's latest comeback, he and Klitschko seemed headed in opposite directions. After stopping Kirk Johnson in two rounds in December 2003, the Ukrainian won the vacant world title in April '04 by taking apart Corrie Sanders in eight rounds. Conversely, in his first start of '04, Williams lost the British title to Michael Sprott, a fighter he had stopped the previous year. But even in his fifth-round TKO of Sprott in September '03, Williams was being outboxed until a couple of low blows helped turn the fight in his favor. And before that Williams also went low to get out of trouble against the lumbering Aussie Bob Mirovic, which came after being dropped three times and stopped in six by the tubby Turk Sinan Samil Sam.

Get the picture? Until the Tyson fight, Williams and Klitschko belonged in different stratospheres. But in boxing, fortunes change with the blink of an eye, or in Williams' case, the blur of 16 punches. His gutsy fourth-round knockout victory over Tyson transformed his reputation from underachiever to serious contender with big match temperament.

If you buy this, you might also latch on to Williams' respectable 32-3 (27) record and the fact that he flattened Kali Meehan in one round. The big New Zealander's only other loss came via dubious split decision against top-10 contender Lamon Brewster last time out. On the other hand, you might recall that Cliff Etienne and Charles

Shufford had already beaten Brewster. And as far as Williams' victory over Tyson is concerned, it should be remembered that Iron Mike was 38 years old, having his first outing in 17 months, and injured his left knee in the first round.

Williams is just hard to get in clear focus. To find his like in heavyweight history you'd have to go back 75 years to the prime of Jack Sharkey. "The Boston Gob" was a sublime talent from the neck down; his problem was his emotional makeup. Without warning he'd burst into tears, turn the wrong way, resort to low blows, or stink the place out. Like with Williams, you never knew what you'd get.

Williams, too, shows glimpses of class. He's large, moves well, and has sharp reflexes, a refined blocking and parrying defense, and good head movement. His jab is fast and heavy, he's an excellent bodypuncher, and he has a busy work rate. But when expectations are high, he tends to weep in the dressing room and then fall to pieces in the ring. When that happens, he loses his fighting rhythm, gets pushed around by smaller men, and, like Sharkey, punches low.

After an underachieving amateur career, Williams turned professional in 1995 and reeled off 15 straight wins against the usual suspects before challenging the unimposing British champion Julius Francis. But Williams' fragile mindset shattered, and he was soundly beaten.

They built him up again, including revenge over Francis, and sent him to Germany in 2003 for a supposedly easy outing against Samil Sam, but once again, Williams imploded. His response was to fire his trainer, Jim McDonnell, but he recanted after a medical report suggested that glandular fever contributed to his lethargy, and they were reunited. None of his performances between that setback and his triumph over Tyson gave much hint of promise, with his clowning, wobbly points loss to the smallish Sprott the low mark of his nine-year career.

This form guide attracted Tyson's people, but they should have looked a bit closer. Being a 9-1 underdog suited the English nice guy. Today, he frankly admits that if this fight had been held a year earlier, Tyson would have knocked him out–"probably in the first round"—but something changed in the run-up.

If it hadn't been for his upset kayo of Mike Tyson, Williams certainly wouldn't be getting a crack at the title. But the Englishman's stock soared when he stopped Iron Mike in the fourth round of their July 2004 clash.

"I know I can stop him in four or five rounds," Williams said before the fight and, for once, he looked like he believed it. Afterward, he explained: "I was sure I was going to win."

The fight Tyson should have studied was Williams' victory for the vacant British title in 2001 against Mark Potter. Williams was knocked around and dropped by the smaller journeyman, and then dislocated his right shoulder. Most ringsiders felt McDonnell should have pulled him out, but he sent his man back to battle.

No one expected him to last the sixth round, but at this point Williams showed another side. In agony, with his right arm hanging

Klitschko erased a lot of doubts about his fortitude in his bloody TKO loss to then-champion Lennox Lewis in June '03. The Ukrainian wanted to fight on despite suffering 62 stitches worth of cuts.

PHOTOS BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

limply by his side, he refused to surrender. Potter charged and Williams caught him with a massive left hook to put him on his back. Two knockdowns later, it was over.

Williams likes to compare his own heroic effort, when behind on points and with seven rounds to go, with Klitschko's in the Chris Byrd fight, when, miles ahead and with only three rounds remaining, Klitschko pulled out after tearing his left rotator cuff.

But in boxing there's a hazy line between courage and cowardice. The gutsy Williams went on to fall apart against Samil Sam and Sprott, while the supposedly yellow Klitschko showed immense courage in standing up to some huge blows from Lennox Lewis, punches that not only rocked him, but drilled holes in his face, requiring 62 stitches to close. Moreover, Klitschko would have fought

Although he's had several disappointing performances, Williams showed tremendous courage knocking out Mark Potter (top) after suffering a painful dislocation of his right shoulder (above). This was the fight in which he won the British title.

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PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Williams and his trainer, Jim McDonnell, believe Klitschko, pictured looking weary between rounds during his fight with Corrie Sanders, has a stamina problem that they will be able to exploit. Against Sanders, Klitschko was somewhat lucky that his opponent's stamina was even worse than his own.

on if the ringside physician hadn't insisted otherwise.

Williams recognizes Klitschko is "probably one of the best in the world" and suggests the fight will be "interesting because of his height," but actually "not much harder" than the Tyson encounter because the champion's sole assets relate to his size and strength. According to Williams, take these away and Klitschko is merely an "average" fighter who throws too few combinations, lacks in-fighting skills, can't fight in retreat, and has a "big time stamina problem." Still, Williams reluctantly concedes: "I respect his power, but he doesn't hit as hard as Tyson, because then he'd have more early-round knockouts in world class."

Actually, Klitschko's record of early-round stoppages is pretty respectable, as 25 of his 33 knockout victims fell within the first three, including Johnson, Orlin Norris, Herbie Hide, and Francis.

McDonnell feels his man has the edge in every department—skill, strength, speed, and most of all, lung power, which he feels will be the key to the outcome.

"Stamina will win this for us," said McDonnell. "Danny is a real athlete. He can run the 100 meters in 13 seconds and push jeeps uphill. I'm going to have Danny's lungs burning in training and we'll set a pace Klitschko cannot match."

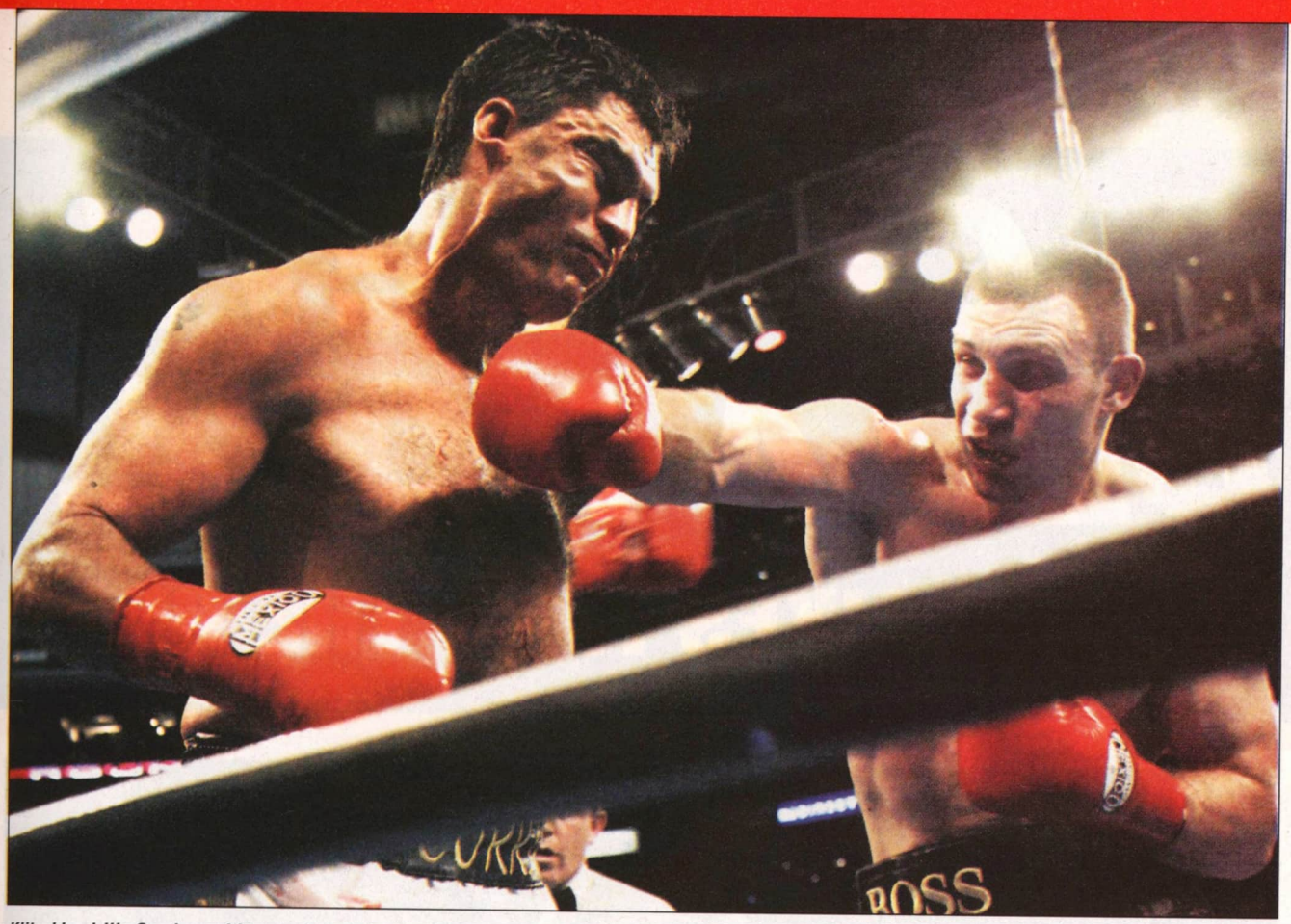
Klitschko is reluctant to denigrate the opposition, preferring to hype sales by talking of the daunting task he faces. He predicts a "thriller," while pumping up his rival's "great performance" against Tyson. "I know this will be a very tough fight for me," he said.

Old foe Francis, however, is not so sure about the tough bit and feels the odds are legitimately in the Ukrainian's favor. He disputes the claim that the champion has stamina issues and also stresses that Klitschko takes a very good punch. But it is on the question of power where he feels the gap is the most significant.

"Vitali hits as hard as Tyson and Lewis," said Francis, who sparred with Lewis and lost in two rounds to both Tyson and Klitschko. "Danny hits hard too, but not as hard as those three. They are single-shot kayo artists, while Danny overwhelms opponents with flurries. He throws more punches than Klitschko, but in this fight it will be difficult."

With his 91 percent knockout ratio, Klitschko, 34-2 (33) overall, can clearly whack, but his failure to drop Lewis or Sanders suggests his sleep-inducing potential may not be quite in the Tyson league. What is clear, however, is that he's a bigger hitter than Williams, whose 77 percent stoppage ratio was built at a lower level.

What about the stamina slur? It is true, as Williams stresses, that Klitschko was exhausted by the end of his draining battle with Lewis, but, as the champion counters, "You've seen my record. I can punch hard



Klitschko drills Sanders with a straight right en route to an eighth-round TKO victory in April 2004. It is powerpunches like this that many think could carry him to victory over Williams. But it should be remembered that Williams stood up under some vicious blows from Tyson before prevailing.

in all 12 rounds." Sanders, Larry Donald, Vaughn Bean, Ross Puritty, and Obed Sullivan were all stopped in the later rounds.

And when it comes to durability, Williams has been dropped four times, stopped once, and wobbled several times, while Klitschko has never been dropped, although he was noticeably shaken by Lewis and Sanders.

The 6'1" Williams, who started out at 227 pounds, but weighed 265 against Tyson, may have been able to buckle Iron Mike with his bulk, but "Dr. Ironfist" is a different story. Even Lewis, one of the strongest heavyweight champions of all-time, could not push him around in the clinches. The 6'7" Klitschko, who turned pro at 233 pounds and now weighs 248, is a big-boned man with the kind of raw physical strength that no amount of weight training can mimic.

And unlike fellow giants Michael Grant and Jameel McCline, Klitschko knows how to use his size and strength. His jerky, legs-wide-apart style may not be aesthetically pleasing, but it's proved effective, and he's particularly good at controlling the pace of a fight. Williams says he will come in lighter than usual and move more, but it is worth recalling that Klitschko had no trouble outboxing elusive movers like Byrd (until the injury), Hide, Donald, and Johnson.

Klitschko has a tight defense, tucking his chin behind his shoulder, flicking out a quick left, and then once he finds his range, he hooks off the jab or drops in accurate rights. Byrd's father and trainer, Joe Byrd, who was in the corner when both Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko fought his son, had no doubts about which sibling was superior.

"Vitali is the better of the brothers," he said. "He's so strong and I think he is the better scientific boxer."

But Vitali also has several weaknesses.

First, he's no good off the back foot. As Emanuel Steward put it after the Lewis fight: "I wanted Lennox to lunge at Vitali, throw looping shoots because Klitschko doesn't punch back if you're the aggressor." Second, Steward added, "Even when Lewis missed, Klitschko never counterpunched." Third, Klitschko is not much of an in-fighter. Instead, like Lewis, he prefers to tie up men who come close, although unlike Lennox, he does not own a potent, short-range uppercut. Fourth, the residue of those hideous cuts suffered against Lewis mean his facial skin will always be vulnerable to fresh leaks.

But aside from cuts, it's hard to see a convincing case for a Williams victory, even if he arrives in full control of his fragile mind. Klitschko simply brings more into the ring: He's naturally bigger, stronger, hits harder, has greater experience, and is a more effective long-range boxer.

Klitschko could win early, because, as Williams admits, "I'm always at my worst in the first few rounds." But a more likely scenario is that the champion will grind out a precision victory by picking him off at long range. Williams may have his moments with his power jabs and beefy bodyblows, but by the middle rounds Klitschko will be in firm control, with the stoppage coming between rounds seven and nine. ■

Gavin Evans is a London-based freelance writer and a regular contributor to this magazine.

"You Want To Get Up, But You Can't"

FROM CORBETT TO DE LA HOYA, NOBODY LIKES IT IN THE BODY

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

By going to the body (opposite page), undisputed middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins left Oscar De La Hoya writhing on the canvas (above) to end the biggest fight of 2004. It may go down as the most significant bodypunch knockout in more than a century.

By Don Stradley

The bout between Bernard Hopkins and Oscar De La Hoya may not be remembered as a fight for the ages, but it gave us one lasting image, namely the bodyshot that left De La Hoya on the canvas as if he'd been zapped with a policeman's Taser.

"It was right on the button," De La Hoya said. "When you get hit like that, you're stuck. You want to get up, but you can't."

Just two months earlier, Arturo Gatti stopped Leonard Dorin with a left hook to the ribs. And two weeks after Hopkins-De La Hoya, Ricardo Mayorga absorbed countless headshots from Felix Trinidad before finally going down from a left to the flanks. Apparently, the art of bodypunching is alive and well.

"It's always a part of boxing," said noted trainer Joe Goossen. "People don't notice it until it happens in a major fight. And it rarely happens in major fights because elite fighters aren't supposed to be taken out that way."

Goossen, who spent his formative years attending fight cards in the legendary California venues where Ruben Olivares, Bobby Chacon, and Oscar "Shotgun" Albarado dished out serious body punishment, agrees that Hopkins is a great bodypuncher. Still, he won't overpraise his stoppage of De La Hoya.

"At another time in his career, Oscar might have absorbed that punch," said Goossen. "Bernard is bigger and stronger than Oscar, and that had something to do with it. But it happened on a big stage, so it will get a lot of attention."

Bodypunching is to boxing what base stealing is to baseball. It's part of the game, but only the top practitioners are remembered. Historians will point to Jim Jeffries, Billy Petrolle, Henry Armstrong, Tony Zale, Jose Torres, and Roberto Duran as being among the best. For a period of time in the early-1980s there seemed to be a scarcity of good bodypunchers, as if young fighters were under the spell of stick-and-move artists like Muhammad Ali. Then came the emergence of fighters like Mike Tyson and Julio Cesar Chavez, and bodypunching was back in the spotlight. Tyson's specialty, the right to the body followed by a right uppercut, was actually a throwback to the very early days of gloved boxing, a move practiced from the left side by "Gentleman" Jim Corbett. Corbett, of course, played a role in perhaps the most famous bodypunch of all-time. Unfortunately for him, he was on the receiving end.

When Bob Fitzsimmons arrived in Carson City, Nevada, in 1897 to challenge Corbett for the heavyweight championship, he was asked by newspapermen for a prediction. "I'll hit him somewhere in the body," he said. "It ain't so easy to hit him on the chin."

After 13 bloody rounds, Fitzsimmons finally landed his moneymaker. Journalist Robert H. Davis described the punch this way: "Such was the speed and violence of

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Arturo Gatti celebrates as Leonard Dorin struggles to make his body function properly at the conclusion of their July '04 bout. When a bodyshot lands in just the right way, it's nearly impossible for even the toughest of warriors to beat the count.

the blow that Fitzsimmons' left arm seemed to disappear into Corbett's midsection, almost to the elbow. A groan came from Jim's open mouth. He strained as if stricken with lockjaw, the whole upper body retching in apparent effort to reassemble the bodily functions and start to live again."

After reading Dr. John W. Girdner's announcement that Corbett had been struck in the "solar plexus," a fancy term for the pit of the stomach, Davis depicted Fitzsimmons as a scientific type who studied anatomy charts. But Fitz was no scientist. He was just a tough old bird who'd been fighting since the bare-knuckle era. The Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight was given major coverage by newsmen and was also captured on film, so the solar plexus punch became Fitzsimmons' legacy.

History's forgotten bodypuncher would be "The Pottawatamie Giant," Jess Willard, whose favorite punch was a right hand smash to the heart. After an opponent named "Bull" Young died of injuries in

TODAY'S BEST BODYPUNCHERS

Marco Antonio Barrera: The last punch Paulie Ayala felt prior to retiring was Barrera's left hook to the liver. No wonder he decided to hang 'em up. Barrera's hook is classic: long, explosive, and always on target.

Jose Luis Castillo: The current lightweight champion's hefty knockout percentage is due partly to his heavy-handed body attack. He would have won his first fight with Floyd Mayweather if the judges had taken notice of his bodywork.

Jesus Chavez: Chavez has gone a long way in his career with not much more than a first-rate body attack. He's not a one-punch specialist like Barrera, but a steady, methodical rib roaster.

Miguel Cotto: Young Cotto does everything well, but his hook to the body is especially effective. Just ask journeymen Carlos Ramirez and Joel Perez. They were both stopped by Cotto's bodyshots.

Juan Diaz: During his youth, Diaz was advised to go easy on the bodypunches because the other kids wouldn't fight him. His rapid-fire technique was on display in his most recent victory over Lakva Sim.

Arturo Gatti: Gatti has always been a good bodypuncher, but 30 rounds with Micky Ward served as a sort of bodyblow finishing school. The punch that stopped Dorin was state of the art.

Ricky Hatton: Hatton made his Showtime debut by pounding veteran Freddie Pendleton to the canvas in two rounds with a body barrage. "It's very un-British of me," Hatton said of his body-bruising style.

Bernard Hopkins: Take away the

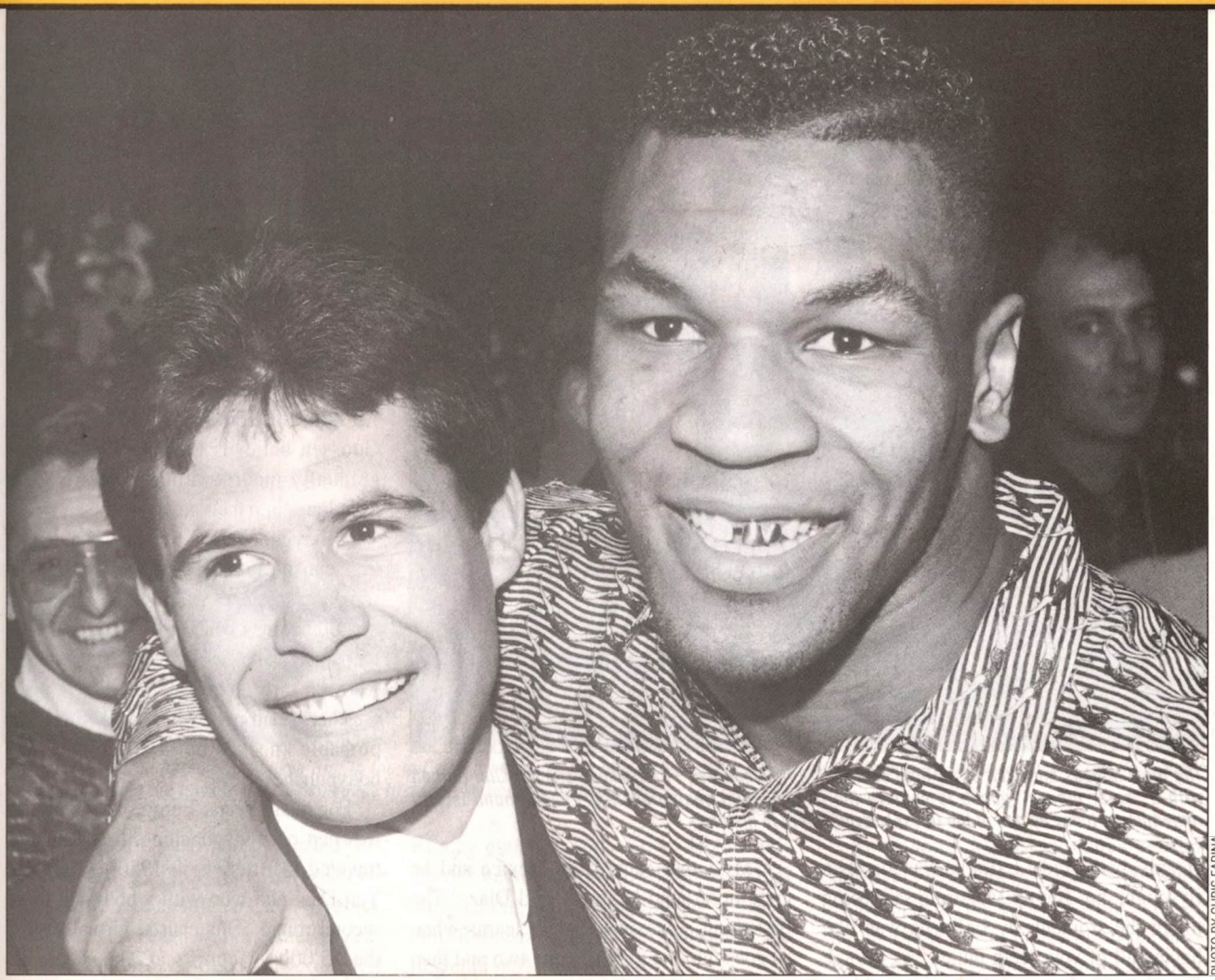


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Superstars Julio Cesar Chavez and Mike Tyson (pictured together in 1989) helped make bodypunching in vogue again. Many of today's fighters idolized these two growing up, which partially explains why so many young boxers are incorporating bodywork into their attack.

knockout of De La Hoya and Hopkins would still be mentioned as one of this era's premiere bodypunchers. Like everything else about him, his body attack is deliberate and effective.

Vassiliy Jirov: The former cruiser titlist is so consumed with attacking the body that he sometimes forgets to throw to the head. He's a rarity in that he was a highly decorated amateur who goes to the body like a pro.

James Toney: He's old school, so he understands the importance of bodypunching. His heavyweight debut saw him stop Evander Holyfied with a rib shot. Most recently he tortured Rydell Booker for 12 rounds using a textbook display of bodyshots.

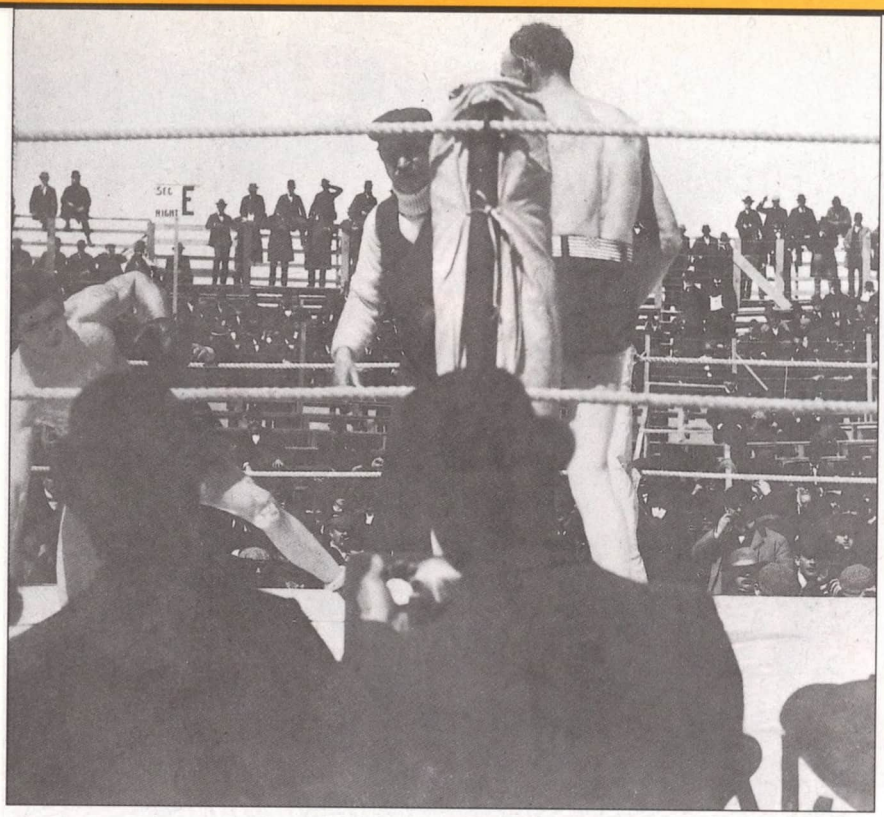
—DS

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Toney's bodywork was unrelenting against Booker

1913, word spread that Young's heart had stopped because of Willard's bodyblows. The real cause of death was a brain injury, but Willard's people wanted to hype his ability as a bodypuncher. He even appeared in a silent one-reeler called *The Heart Punch*.

Bodypunches don't have to come from giants to be effective. In 1914, the middleweight crown changed hands on a bodypunch when Al McCoy stopped champion George Chip. McCoy's trainer, Charlie Goldman, was a great teacher of bodypunching, as evidenced by a fighter he handled four decades later, Rocky Marciano. When Ray Leonard was falling behind against Thomas Hearns in their 1981 battle, Leonard changed the course of the fight by landing wicked hooks to



The most famous bodyshot of all-time came in 1897, when Bob Fitzsimmons stopped Jim Corbett with a "solar plexus" punch to capture the heavyweight championship. Fitzsimmons is still remembered today as one of the finest bodypunchers in history.

Hearns' body. Fidel LaBarba was merely a flyweight, but Jimmy McLarnin said being hit in the stomach by LaBarba was like having all of your teeth pulled. As George Foreman used to say, bodyshots add up like money in the bank. But what makes a bodypunch so debilitating?

"It's impossible to take a deep breath if you have sore muscles or a rib fracture," said ring physician Dr. Margaret Goodman. "As a result, the fighter takes in less oxygen and he becomes tired."

Or, to quote Sam Langford, "Kill the body and the head will follow."

With all of this evidence in favor of bodypunching, one would think it would be a consistent part of every fighter's repertoire. But landing effectively to the body is like sneaking behind enemy lines to plant a bomb. It requires stealth, accuracy, and timing.

"When you throw a bodypunch, you leave yourself open for a lot of punches," said WBA lightweight titlist Juan Diaz. "More fighters might try it now, because of what Hopkins did, but when they start getting countered, they'll say, 'Forget it.'"

Diaz believes a fighter's origin may lead to an appreciation of bodypunching.

"My father came from Mexico and he grew up around boxing," said Diaz. "The first thing a Mexican fighter learns when he goes into the gym is a one-two and then left hook to the body. When I was little he taught me."

Mexican fighters may be the most notorious bodypunchers, but American fighters can go downstairs too. Canada has also turned out some reputable bodybangers, including George Chuvalo and Matthew Hilton. For the most part, European fighters stay close to their amateur roots and aim for the head. Of course, there are exceptions. Marcel Cerdan of France was an excellent bodypuncher. German fans still crow about the big punch Karl Mildenberger landed on Ali's midsection in their 1966 fight. Joe Goossen believes European fighters are gradually incorporating more American techniques into their game.

"Bodypunching is certainly something that can be taught," said Goossen. But sometimes it doesn't have to be taught.

"Sometimes you'll get a rough, raw kid who just wants to hit you everywhere," Goossen said. "You know he'll be a bodypuncher. I had my own, Rafael Ruelas. He probably knocked out a dozen guys with bodypunches."

For many years, European boxing fans frowned on bodypunching. Ray Robinson traveled to Brussels in 1950 to fight Luc Van Dam and won with a bodyshot in the second round. This caused virtually all of the 15,000 spectators at The Palais des

ALL-TIME BEST BODYPUNCHERS

Henry Armstrong: How did "Homicide Hank" win championships in three weight classes? He did it by throwing punches in bunches to both the head and body. Sometimes his body attack backfired; against Lou Ambers he was penalized five times for low blows and lost the lightweight crown by decision.

Julio Cesar Chavez: Chavez' trademark hook to the liver kept the Mexican tradition of bodypunching alive for a new generation of fans. In 1991 he retained his junior welterweight titles by knocking John Duplessis out of the ring with a bodyshot.

Roberto Duran: Quite a few recent bodypunchers, including Tyson and Hatton, pointed to Duran as their idol. It's no wonder. Duran scored many knockouts with bodyblows during his time as the best lightweight of the '70s.

Bob Fitzsimmons: Corbett wasn't his only victim. Fitzsimmons used his crushing body assault to stop Dan Creadon, Ed Dunkhorst, and others. Even blocking his punches did you no good. Frank Allen tried to block Fitzsimmons' left hook and ended up with a broken wrist.

Joe Frazier: Any part of the body between the nipples and the knees was fair game to "Smokin' Joe." He used the body attack to bring an opponent's guard down so he could land his sweeping left hook to the head.

Rocky Marciano: After sparring with Marciano for the benefit of their 1969 "computer fight," Muhammad Ali was astonished by Marciano's bodypunching. Ali said, "My whole body ached, and ours wasn't even a real fight."

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Juan Diaz, pictured hammering Lakva Sim in the gut with a left, says his Mexican heritage helped steer him toward bodypunching. "The Baby Bull" has been throwing the hook to the ribs since the first time he entered a boxing gym.

Sports to stand up and boo the pound-for-pound legend. In 1951, Robinson was disqualified by German referee Otto Nispel for hitting Gerhard Hetch with a kidney punch. (It was ultimately ruled a no-contest.) Kidney punches were part of Robinson's arsenal, but the Berlin crowd perceived it as dirty fighting and started throwing bottles at him. Robinson and his crew hid under the ring until order was restored.

Robinson's kidney punches caused controversy in America too. After Robinson stopped Chuck Taylor with a kidney shot in 1948, Taylor ended up in the hospital with an enlarged kidney. Taylor's camp appealed to the press, saying Robinson's kidney punches should be illegal, but a great deal of discretion is given to referees to make that determination.

Was the hubbub over Robinson simply sour grapes, or were his critics on to something? After all, certain bodyblows leave a fighter grimacing and gasping for air, just as if he'd been hit in the testicles. According to some experts, bodypunches are far more dangerous to a fighter's health than a low blow.

"Very few low blows do any real damage," said Dr. Flip Homanski, who has seen firsthand the effects of bodypunching in his role as a ring doctor for the Nevada State Athletic Commission. "The worst bodypunch is actually below the left rib cage to the spleen, which can rupture and need surgery."

Homanski points to the 1986 bout between Marvin Hagler and John Mugabi as the most violent bodypunching spectacle he's ever seen. "They both urinated blood after the bout, and Mugabi was

Mike McCallum: Hall of Famer McCallum was once hired as a special adviser to Mike Tyson. Something tells us Tyson didn't call "The Bodysnatcher" for tips on footwork.

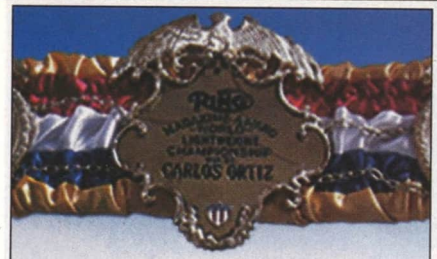
Ruben Olivares: Prior to Chavez, "Rock-a-bye" Ruben was generally regarded as Mexico's finest bodypuncher. He landed his left hook to the liver like he was stabbing someone in a prison riot.

Micky Ward: No fighter in recent history did more to popularize bodypunching. Ward's left to the body could turn a fight around or perhaps end it. It was truly something to fear.

Tony Zale: "The Man Of Steel" was considered the best bodypuncher of his era. He decked Rocky Graziano with a solar plexus punch in the first of their wild three-fight series.

—DS

Marciano goes to work on Roland LaStarza's midsection



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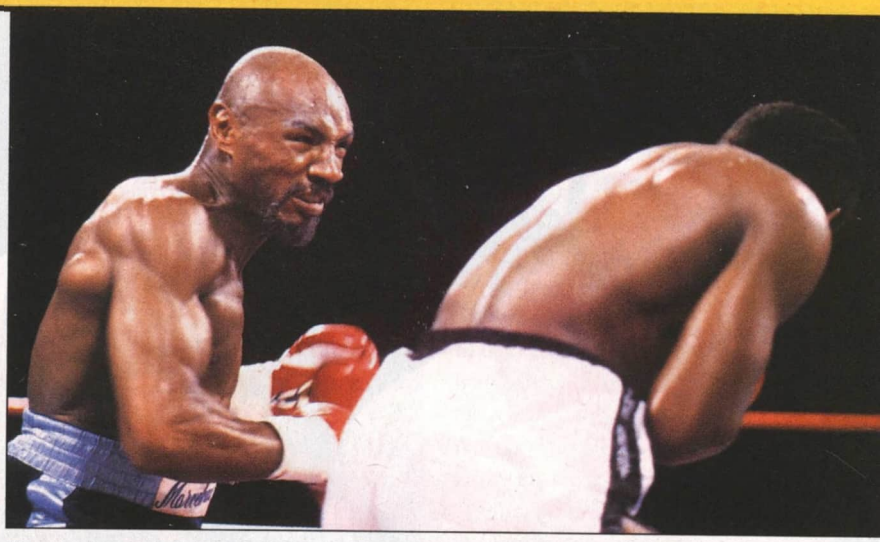

Nevada ringside physician Flip Homansky recalls the Marvin Hagler-John Mugabi middleweight title fight as the most violent display of bodypunching he's ever witnessed. In the opinion of many observers, neither fighter was the same afterward.

never the same. Neither was Hagler."

Dr. Goodman painted an even grimmer picture.

"The blood products can break down and get caught up in the kidneys and lead to kidney failure. If a fighter suffered a rib fracture during the contest, the fight has to stop because they could puncture vital organs, which could be life-threatening."

Another downside to bodypunching is

Ricky Hatton has been doing his part to break the stereotype of European fighters as headhunters. "The Hitman" (pictured against Aldo Rios) goes downstairs with as much voracity as anyone in the sport.

that for all of the pain you inflict, the judges at ringside don't always keep track of bodywork. Many good bodypunchers feel they are given short shrift by judges in favor of flashier fighters.

"The issue of bodywork comes up frequently, and I can tell you with certainty that bodypunching is not ignored," said New York boxing judge Tom Schreck. "In the same way a fighter can throw hooks that land but aren't effective, a fighter can throw bodyshots that land without much on them. A good judge evaluates whether the bodywork was effective."

Juan Diaz has his own thoughts on the subject. "I don't think the judges appreciate bodypunches very much. A lot of bodypunches look like they're being blocked, so the judges ignore them. Bodypunches aren't like an uppercut that snaps the head back, so judges can't see how effective they are."

Whether judges reward bodypunching or not, many fighters remain committed to it. Perhaps the most enthusiastic bodypuncher working today is England's Ricky Hatton.

"When I was about 15, I was training with Pat Barrett, a former British champion who put me down with a bodyshot," Hatton said. "I had never been hurt so badly from a bodypunch, and this gave me inspiration to introduce it into my style."

Listen to the way Hatton's Manchester fans roar when he bulls an opponent into the ropes and starts digging away. They appreciate his bodywork the way basketball fans appreciate a slam dunk. If Hatton does nothing else in his career, he may be remembered as the fighter who took bodypunching out of the trenches and turned it into something glamorous and exciting.

Hopkins' stoppage of De La Hoya will not be as famous as Fitzsimmons' solar plexus punch, but it was similar in that it provided a sudden ending to a widely seen fight. Will historians talk about it 100 years from now? One never knows. But in the meantime, it reminded us that bodypunching is boxing's wildcard. It may not always win fights, but the possibility is always there. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Rockport, Massachusetts, and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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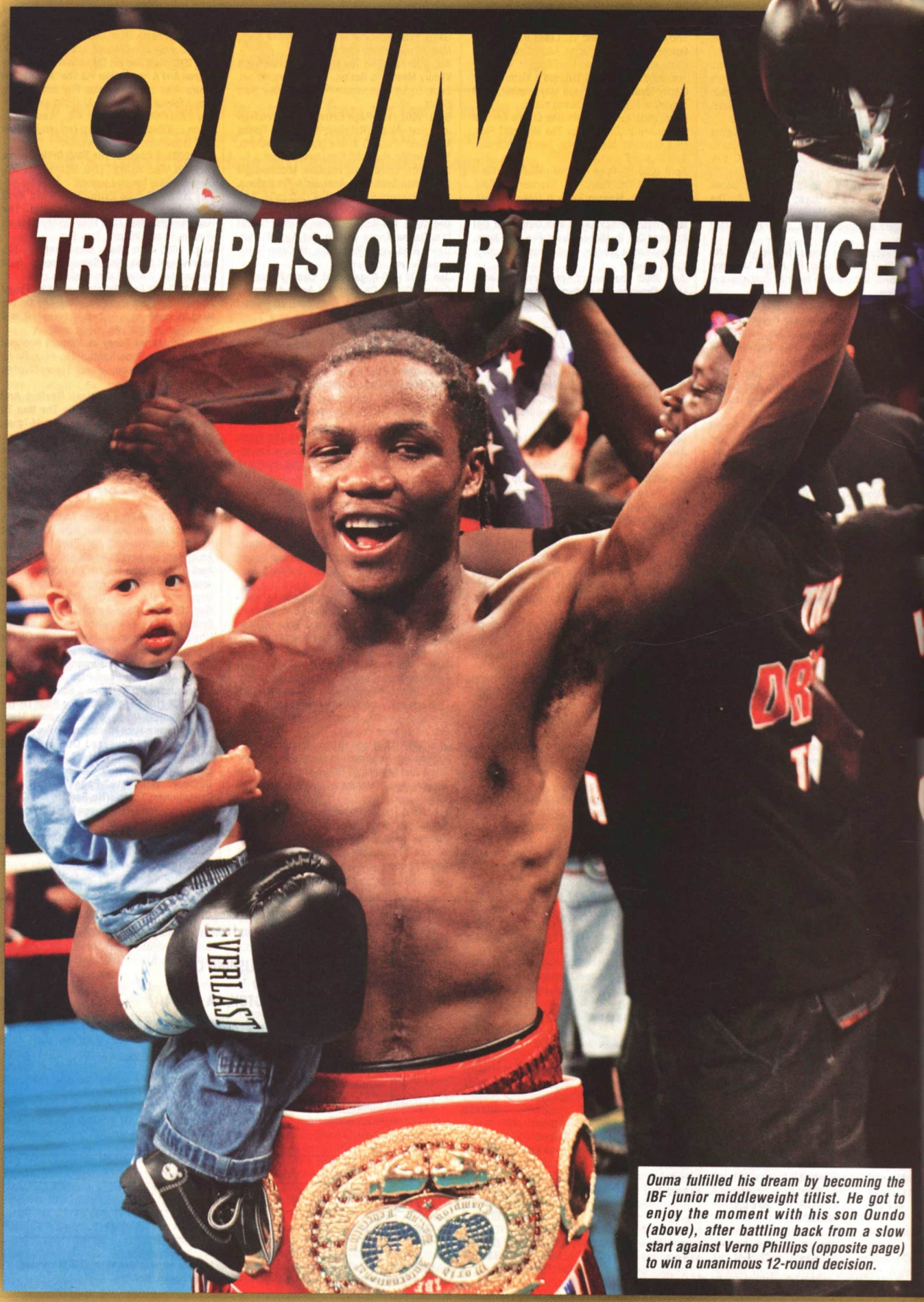
OUMA TRIUMPHS OVER TURBULANCE



Ouma fulfilled his dream by becoming the IBF junior middleweight titlist. He got to enjoy the moment with his son Oundo (above), after battling back from a slow start against Verno Phillips (opposite page) to win a unanimous 12-round decision.

Beating Phillips Was The Easy Part

By Joe Santoliquito

PHOTOS BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

The eerie tableau was all too familiar to Kassim Ouma as he dodged downed wires and splashed through puddles while running past the debris-strewn field of smashed homes. Momentarily, Ouma felt like he was back in Uganda, where he served as a child soldier in a guerilla army. But instead of dodging bullets and bombs, he braced himself against the gray morning chill as he battled the howling winds and curfews of Hurricane Jeanne in Florida.

It was just as precarious, just as life-threatening as war torn Uganda, and Ouma had the same reaction he does to almost everything. It didn't faze him. He kept running.

Ouma was focusing on the most important fight of his life, preparing to meet IBF junior middleweight titleholder Verno Phillips, so he kept working out, even when descending clouds made midday feel like midnight. A constantly humming, battery-operated generator was the only source of electricity he had during a critical two-week training period leading up to the fight, as hurricanes ravaged his new West Palm Beach home.

If Kassim "The Dream" Ouma was able to look into the eye of a hurricane and stare it down, did Phillips really have any chance?

Not really. Recovering from a slow start, Ouma turned up his punch volume to earn the first significant title belt of his career, beating Phillips via 12-round unanimous decision at Caesars Palace's new outdoor arena in Las Vegas. Still, at best, it was an uneven performance by Ouma, 20-1-1 (13) with 1 no-decision. In the process, Ouma and his team learned a

Ouma trained in West Palm Beach, Florida, while Hurricane Jeanne was pelting the area. After facing a hurricane, Ouma figured there was no offense Phillips could mount to stop him.

valuable lesson about how *not* to conduct a productive corner during a championship fight. Without clear advice from his corner, Ouma earned the victory almost entirely on his own.

What can't be lost in the mix is that Ouma won. The victory places the 25-year-old southpaw in a strong position. One option is dangling the IBF bauble in front of junior middleweight world champion Winky Wright as enticement for a unification fight. (That's if Wright survives Shane Mosley in their November rematch.) Or Ouma could take a more immediate, safer route and fight WBO titlist Daniel Santos in early-December, which was being discussed as this magazine was going to press. Either way, Ouma is in for the biggest step of his career, after working off the ring rust against Phillips.

What started as a shaky outing for Ouma gradually grew stronger, much like the hurricane he trained through.

"There are things that might bother Kassim for a minute, but nothing seems to bother him for long," said Tom Moran, Ouma's manager. "The whole training camp was very inconsistent. He trained for a little bit in Philly, but he went back to West Palm Beach. He called about the Roy Jones-Glen Johnson fight for constant updates, and to tell me what was going on with the hurricane.

"Tim Witherspoon was training him, and went down there with Kassim. Tim wanted to do the loyal thing as a trainer and stay with his fighter, but he was scared to death. Kassim set his mind from the beginning that he was going to fly out to Vegas from Florida. He wasn't going to let a hurricane get in the way of his plans."

Ouma bore the dangers of the hurricane so well, he made a joke of it. Anyone that called his cell phone during that time heard Ouma answer, "Hurricane Jeanne hotline." He even had Moran believing the Weather Channel was interviewing him on his front lawn as the storm raged.

"I was up all night; the rain was cold, and I was like a soldier again back home in Uganda," said Ouma in his thick African accent. "My mommy told me not to go out, but I had to get ready for the fight and I had to stay with my family. It was too much money to fly my family out to Vegas, and the house was new, so I decided to stay there and go through the hurricane."

As soon as Ouma beat Phillips, he found himself embroiled in the eye of another storm. Ugandan Army Major Shaban Bantariza told Reuters News Service that he was unimpressed that Ouma became the first Ugandan to win a title since John "The Beast" Mugabi captured the WBC super welterweight belt in 1989, because "The army is not a sports club and does not associate with deserters."

This offended Ouma, who had been kidnapped as a six-year-old and forced to serve in the Uganda Peoples Defense Forces before defecting to the United States in 1997. Ouma has a new life in the U.S. He's a proud father of son Oundo, who he says has changed his life.

But Ouma would like to one day have his American-born son be able to spend his life with his sister and brother, Ouma's nine-year-old daughter and seven-year-old son who are still in Uganda. It pains the carefree Ouma to even think of their plight. Just like it pains him to be labeled a deserter in Uganda.

The penalty for military desertion in Uganda is death.

"They've pissed me off," Ouma said of Uganda's reaction to his title-winning fight with Phillips. "The one thing I'm proud of is that I fought to overthrow the government that was there. If it wasn't for me, that commander wouldn't be in power. I would like to go back to Uganda and do good things. I'm a proud Ugandan and they say I can be a hero there, but they'll arrest me when I go home. I want to see my kids get here and I want to see the kids

Phillips started well, boxing Ouma and connecting with looping rights to the body and head. It was in stark contrast from the way Phillips attacked Ouma in their first fight, when the veteran was willing to brawl.

I grew up with. I want to do good things for Uganda."

As a point of national pride, Ouma, wearing a red Pat Tillman Arizona Cardinals jersey in honor of the fallen NFL hero, carried the Ugandan flag into the ring for the Phillips fight.

The Dream was ready for a war just like his first fight with Phillips, on September 7, 2001, when Ouma won a unanimous 10-round decision, made possible with a ninth-round knockdown. But this time, Phillips wanted to box more than he did in their original fight, and within the opening seconds of the fight, Phillips revealed the blueprint: Make Ouma come forward, make him pay with quick combinations, and then get out of harm's way. It was a different style than what Ouma anticipated.

For the first two rounds, it worked for Phillips. He pounded Ouma's body inside, kept pumping his jab, and connected with wide punches. Ouma, meanwhile, was confused. He hardly did anything, appearing uncharacteristically lethargic.

"I hadn't been in the ring in nine months and I didn't know what Verno's plans were," Ouma said. "He confused me in the beginning. The first fight, he tried to sit there and fight with me. This time, he ran and he boxed more. But it wasn't only boxing; he was holding on to me."

Ouma, however, changed the course of the fight in the third round when he started to get his punches off. Phillips, 38-10-1 (20), even slammed a right to Ouma's jaw and hit him with a few bodypunches, but Ouma just walked through the shots. At the bell, Ouma returned to his corner and raised his hands.

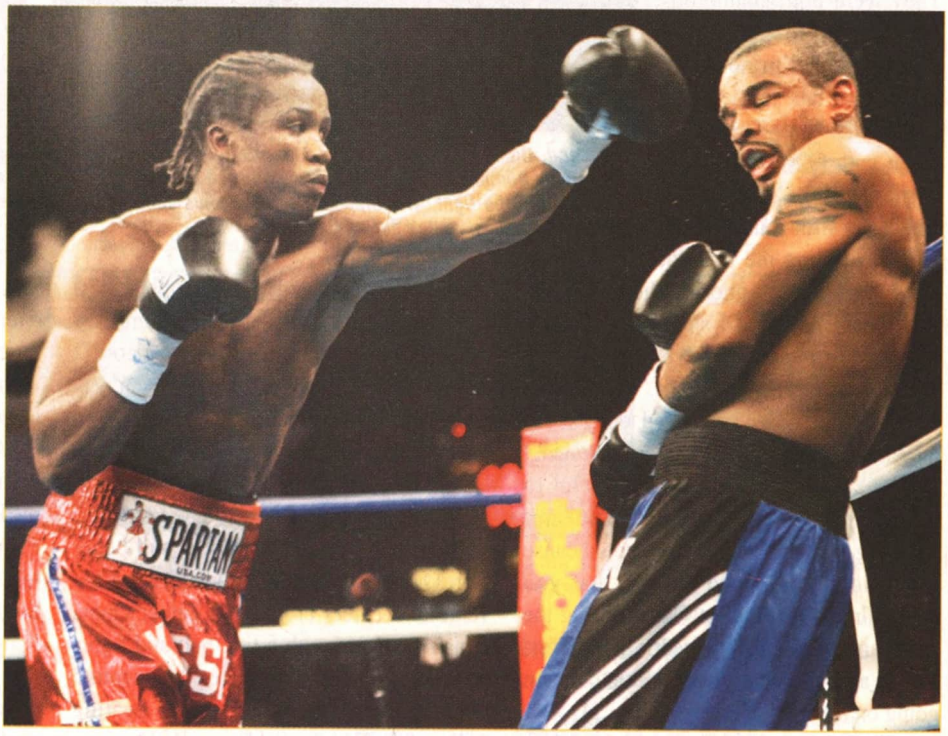
"After the third round, I started to feel comfortable," Ouma said. "Verno was very strong, and he has a lot of boxing skills. But I started to feel like I was taking the fight over. I knew he was tired, even in the third round. I did whatever I could to break him down. I had to come at him like I was going to war."

By the middle of the fight, Ouma was effectively countering Phillips, who kept relying on his looping overhand rights. Phillips started showing signs of fatigue in the eighth, holding more.

Ouma really asserted himself in the 11th, prying open what had been a close fight and turning it into a convincing victory. It was an Ouma bodyshot that knocked down Phillips in the ninth round of their first fight, and Ouma struck again with a vicious left hook to Phillips' ribs midway through the 11th. THE RING, like the three official judges, scored that a 10-8 round for Ouma, even though there was no knockdown.

Phillips showed great courage by hanging on despite being visibly shaken, and looked like he was ready to go again in the 12th, bouncing off the ropes on rubbery legs, as referee Joe Cortez peered in closely.

The last two rounds swayed judges Dick Houck and Paul Smith, who both scored the fight 114-113 for Ouma. Dalby Shirley needed no added convincing, scoring it



Ouma began picking up the pace in the middle of the fight, pinning Phillips against the ropes, where the defending titleholder winced in pain a number of times as Ouma's shots slammed home.

117-110 for The Dream, the same as THE RING.

Besides facing Phillips, Ouma was involved in another ongoing fight that night. This one involved Ouma's chaotic corner. Co-trainers Witherspoon and Johnny Bumphus should have carried pom-poms in their hands instead of towels and water bottles, because they acted more like cheerleaders than technical advisers.

When Ouma came back to his corner between rounds, the trainers appeared to be fighting more for Ouma's attention than working with each other to help him. In short, Ouma was alone.

"I was angry for a minute, then I started to ignore them and do my best," Ouma said of his corner. "I had to do whatever it took to win the fight. I need someone to talk to me nice and easy. I need someone to prove to me that they know what's going on in the ring.

"I like Johnny and Tim. They were both champions, and I want to keep them working. But I'm not going to let them talk to me in the corner like that. They can't argue with each other in my corner while I'm fighting. About the fifth round, everyone was telling me this and that, and I started ignoring them. No one was telling me what I should be doing. I can't have another fight like that against a top guy. It can't happen again."

In the end, Ouma was triumphant, no thanks to co-trainers Tim Witherspoon (right) and Johnny Bumphus (left), who both celebrated by picking up "The Dream" at the conclusion of the fight. Witherspoon and Bumphus constantly competed with each other for Ouma's attention during the bout.

Al Bernstein, who provided analysis for the Showtime broadcast, was confounded.

"I like those guys, they have a lot to offer Ouma," Bernstein said. "But not speaking with one single voice could cause confusion. I really do believe that you could almost feel that in Ouma during the fight, and maybe it reflected in his performance as well. You sensed a little division going on there.

"That's certainly an issue that they have to address. Ouma had to pick and choose what he heard and what he didn't. You have to ask whether or not there was any division during his preparation. I thought it was one of the most uneven performances I've seen from Ouma in some time, but he won. When you have that kind of ability, which he does, you're likely to win on nights when things aren't right."

Bernstein believes Wright is still better than Ouma, but that The Dream is on the verge of a career crossroads. Either Ouma remains content with a title belt and fights easy mandatories or he makes the quantum leap to boxing superstardom by beating fighters like Wright and Fernando Vargas.

Ouma's people recognize this as well. But they feel that first they have to correct the corner problem. They weren't too pleased with what transpired during the Phillips fight either. Though happy with the end result, they're aware that when the time comes for The Dream to face someone like Wright, Mosley, or any of the elite fighters, an overcrowded corner could lead to Ouma's demise.

"There are no excuses," Moran said. "It was Kassim's choice who his head trainer was. It's his choice who calls the shots. It was completely distracting to Kassim and he got no help. Tim is my friend and Johnny has been a great trainer, and you had two strong personalities in that corner. Kassim has to have one person talking to him and one person alone.

"Kassim is a much smarter fighter and a much better fighter than he looked at moments against Phillips. The key thing is that it was a situation with too many people with too many opinions. Kassim is constantly improving as a fighter. But this hurts all of us. We need one voice and one voice alone. It's a question of what is best for Kassim. It was an embarrassment for everyone, but we have a team. We'll be much more consistent in his next fight. This wasn't Kassim's fault. We've recognized the problem and it will be resolved."

After Ouma outlasted Hurricane Jeanne and the whirling punches thrown by Phillips, he came back home to West Palm Beach. His family was safe, although his swimming pool was damaged, with a large tree lurching into it. But one thing hanging in Ouma's backyard withstood the wind, rain, and flying debris—his Ugandan flag.

Ouma just hopes it's not the only remnant of Uganda that he can hold dearly. ■

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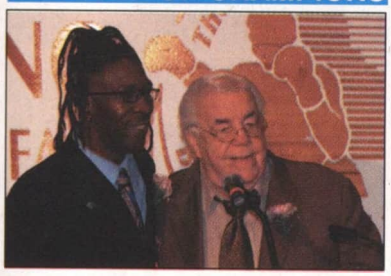
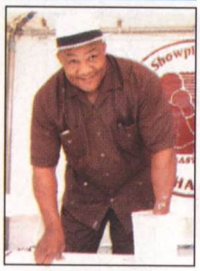


Reminiscing . . . Livingstone Bramble and Lou Duva share fight stories with Banquet crowd.

FIST CASTING



Everlasting . . . Fist cast by George Foreman.

PARADE OF CHAMPIONS

Marvelous . . . Marvin Hagler waves to fans.

Hooray . . . Grand Marshal Tony Orlando enjoys fans along Parade route.

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VICTORIANO SOSA

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Autographs . . . George Foreman spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

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Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

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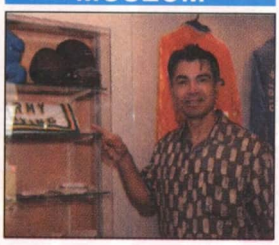
GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

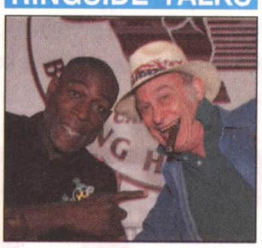


Carlos Palomino points to his boxing robe on display.

WORKOUT SESSIONS

Antonio Tarver working the heavy bag during a public workout.

RINGSIDE TALKS



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The RING

Update

TONY "THE TIGER" LOPEZ

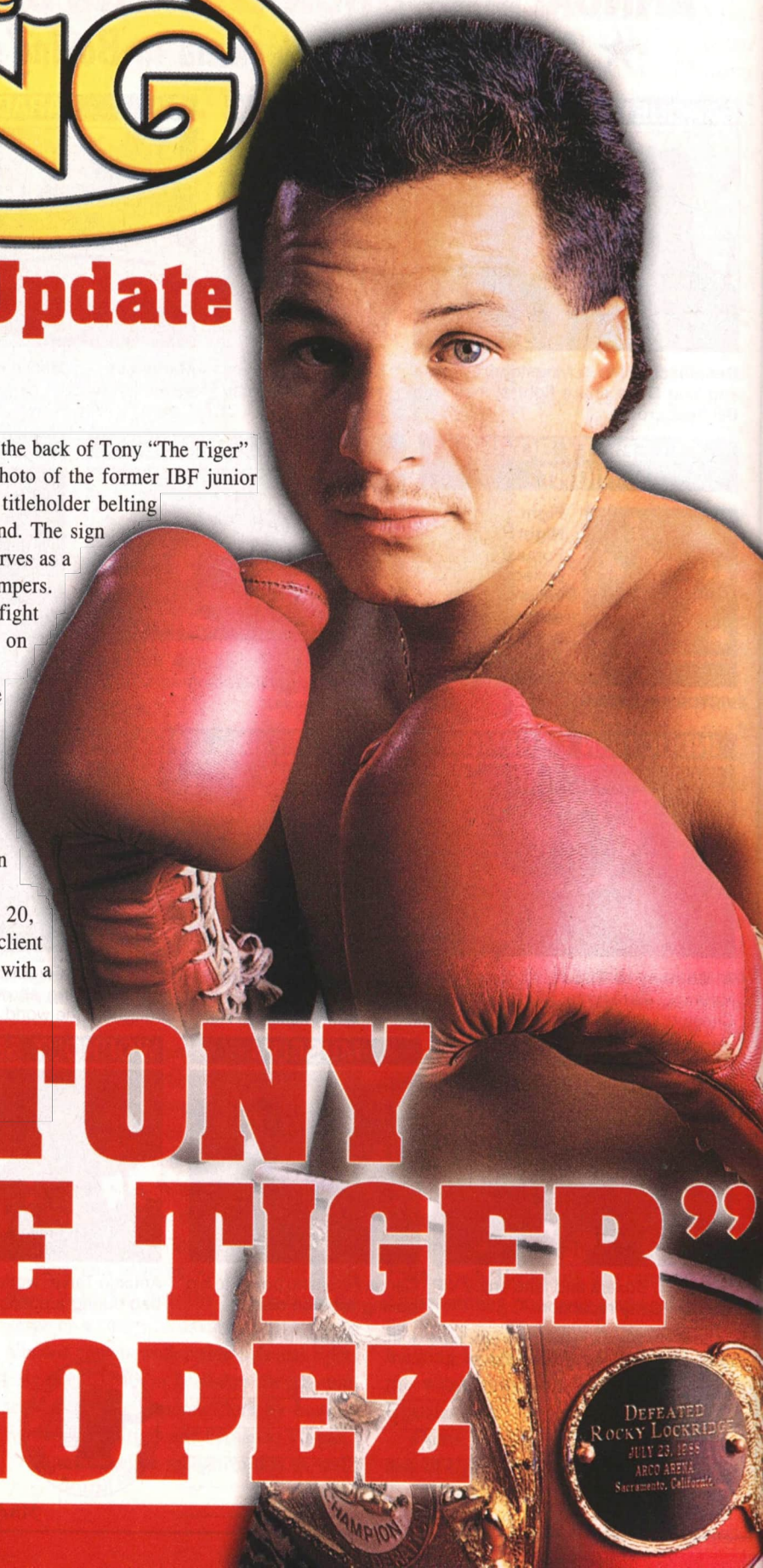
By Robert Mladinich

The ad for his bail bonds business on the back of Tony "The Tiger" Lopez' Toyota 4Runner shows a photo of the former IBF junior lightweight and WBA lightweight titleholder belting Joey Gamache in the face with a right hand. The sign touts Lopez' "knockout service" and also serves as a not-so-subtle warning to would-be bail jumpers. Because as anyone who ever saw Lopez fight knows, this is one tiger you don't want on your tail.

Since retiring from the ring in 1999, the popular Sacramento, California, fighter has been busier than ever. After a short time spent as a private investigator, Lopez and his wife, Cathy, opened Tony "The Tiger" Bail Bonds Inc. in downtown Sacramento. To say business has been brisk would be an understatement.

"We posted our first bail on January 20, 2000," said Lopez. "It was for $30,000. The client put up $3,000—full premium. So we started with a knockout."

Clients seeking bail from bondsmen are required to pay up front a 10 percent premium on the total bail amount, which is kept as



"I Was An Old-School Fighter, And I'm An Old-School Person"

PHOTO BY ROBERT MLADINICH

Then and now: Lopez as he looked in 1988, shortly after winning the IBF junior lightweight belt by outpointing Rocky Lockridge (opposite page) and today, with his wife, Cathy, posing outside their bail bonds business (above).

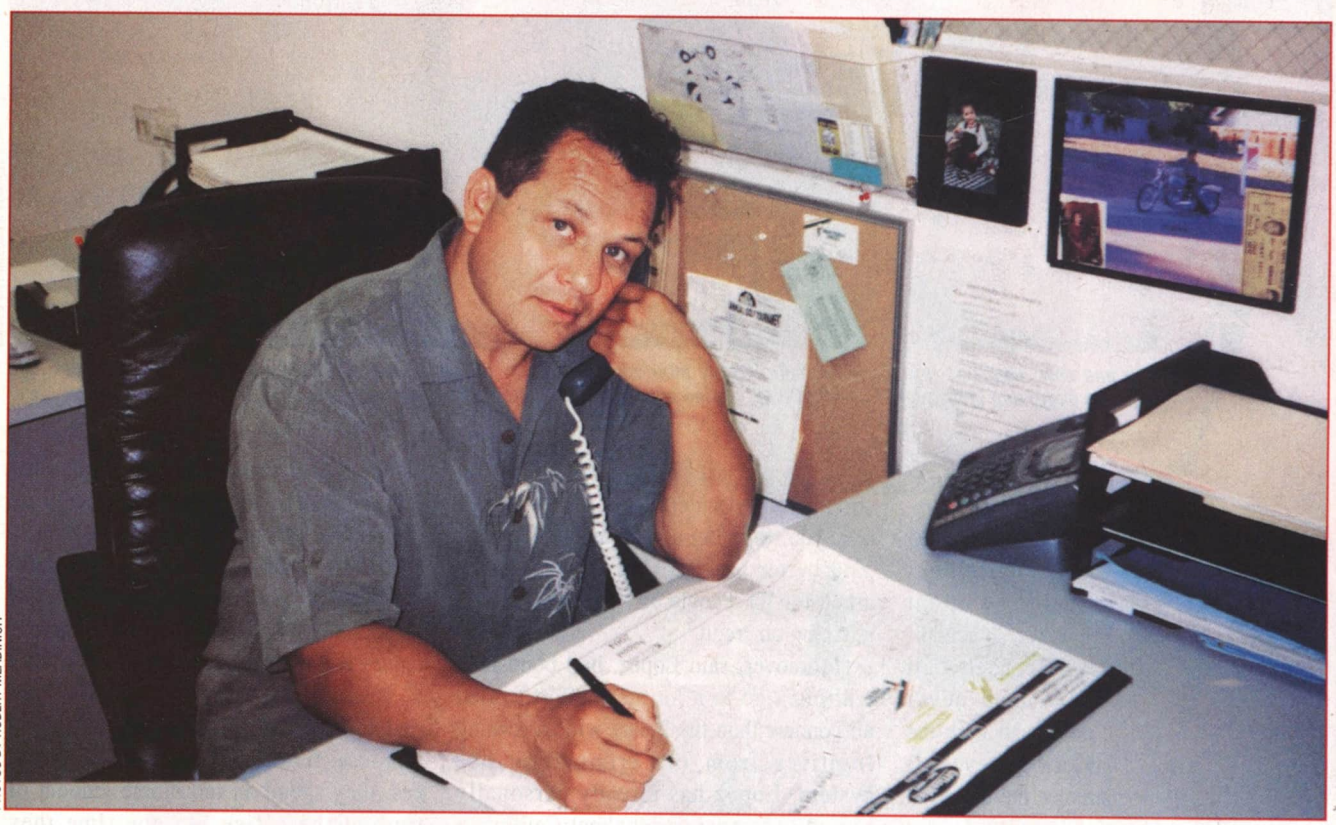
the bondsmen's fee. In return, bondsmen guarantee the total amount to the court should the client abscond. In actuality, licensed bail bondsmen never post cash with the court. They just guarantee the money if the need arises.

"We juggle a lot of paper money," said Lopez. "But the possibility of losing a great deal of money is always there. Any bail over $100,000 requires collateral, like a deed to a house. We lost lots of money last year, and are always looking for ways to reduce our risk. I can tell you this, if you abscond and decide to live life as a fugitive, you're giving up life as you know it. You better pray to God you never get asked for ID. People on the run don't buy anything on credit."

Moreover, said Lopez, bail bondsmen will often go to a lot more effort to find absconders than the police will in seeking fugitives from the criminal justice system. Lopez has already personally chased absconders throughout California, where he says the law provides bondsmen and bounty hunters "great latitude," and as far away as Oklahoma and New York.

"Very often the person who co-signed the bond will give the person up," said Lopez. "They don't want to lose their money. Other times you might spend the same amount of money you're trying to get back on the search. The way we look at it, whatever we get back is better than nothing. You can't set a precedent. You can't let people think they can run off with your money and not be accountable."

Because Lopez and his wife, who married each other just 22 days after meeting at a local fitness center, have no employees, they spend an inordinate amount of time at the office. At one time they employed several people, but found themselves babysitting them instead of working alongside them. When they realized how much they were paying in salaries and workman's compensation, they opted to go it alone. Being by nature such hard work-



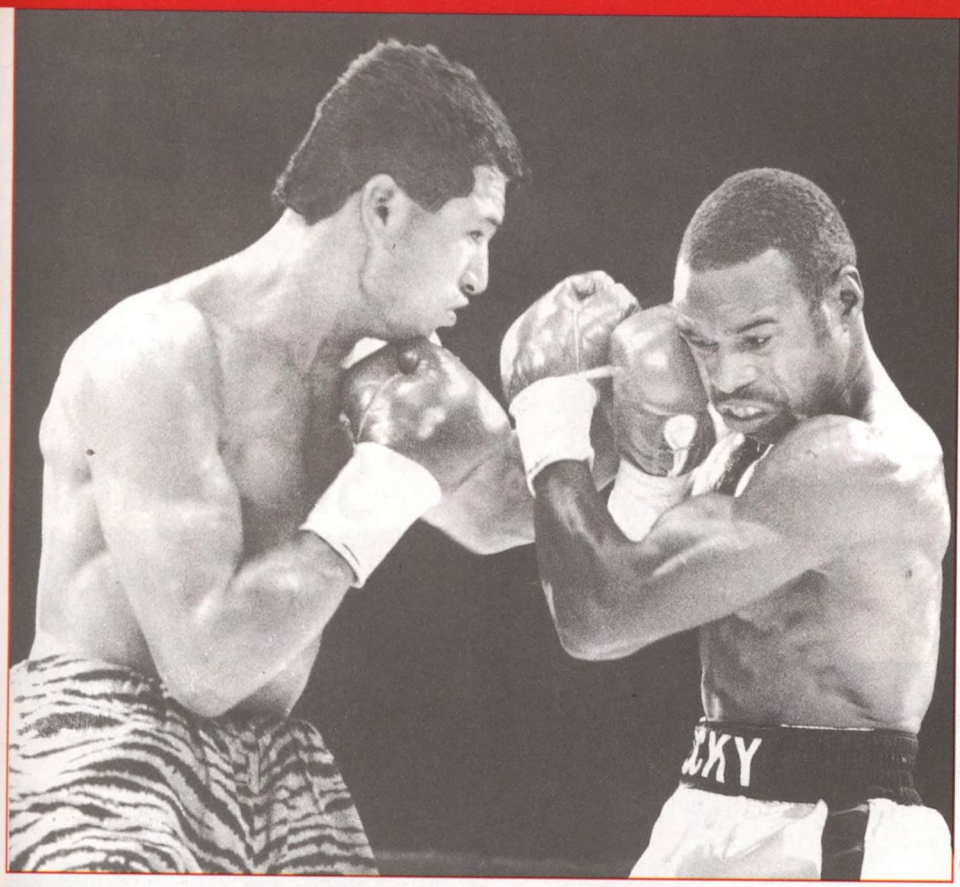
PHOTOS BY ROBERT MLADINICH

Lopez has gone about his bail bondsman career with the same dedication and aggression he brought to the boxing ring. Originally, he employed hired help, but now he and his wife do all of the hands-on work themselves. Part of their policy is treating all clients with respect.

ers, they chuckle at the perception of their business being reserved for wizened, sweaty, cigar-chomping sleazebags with no sense of morality.

"This is a very professional business, with a lot of checks and balances," said Cathy. "Everyone is licensed by the state, so there are many rules and regulations."

"We're like a ghetto bank," interjected Lopez. "Basically we loan money to people who can't afford to get money anywhere else. It's that simple."



Lopez goes head-to-head with Rocky Lockridge in their thrilling 1988 bout that was selected as The Ring's Fight of the Year. Lopez won the IBF belt by decision in front of an ecstatic hometown crowd at Arco Arena.

Lopez sends sweat flying from Jorge Paez' head with a stiff jab during their September 1990 bout, which Lopez won via decision. It was "The Tiger's" sixth successful defense of the 130-pound belt.

While the concept of the business might be simple, how Lopez got into it is a bit more convoluted. After retiring from the ring with a 50-8-1 (34) record against the likes of such championship-caliber fighters as Julio Cesar Chavez (KO by 10), Freddie Pendleton (KO by 8), Greg Haugen (KO 10), Dingaan Thobela (W 12, L 12), Joey Gamache (KO 11), Brian Mitchell (D 12, L 12), Charles Murray (L 12), Jorge Paez (W 12), John-John Molina (W 12, KO by 10, W 12), and Rocky Lockridge (W 12, W 12) during a 16-year career that began in 1983, he is the first to admit he did nothing but "goof off" for much of the first year.

"All I ever did in my life was box or do manual labor, so I didn't have any big plans for life after boxing," he said. "A friend suggested I go to private investigator's school. But I was used to lots of excitement, and work as a P.I. was hours of boredom and two seconds of excitement."

What was worse was the fact that the excitement was usually nothing more than snapping a photo of someone who had filed a disability claim lifting heavy boxes or engaging in a landscaping or construction project in their yard.

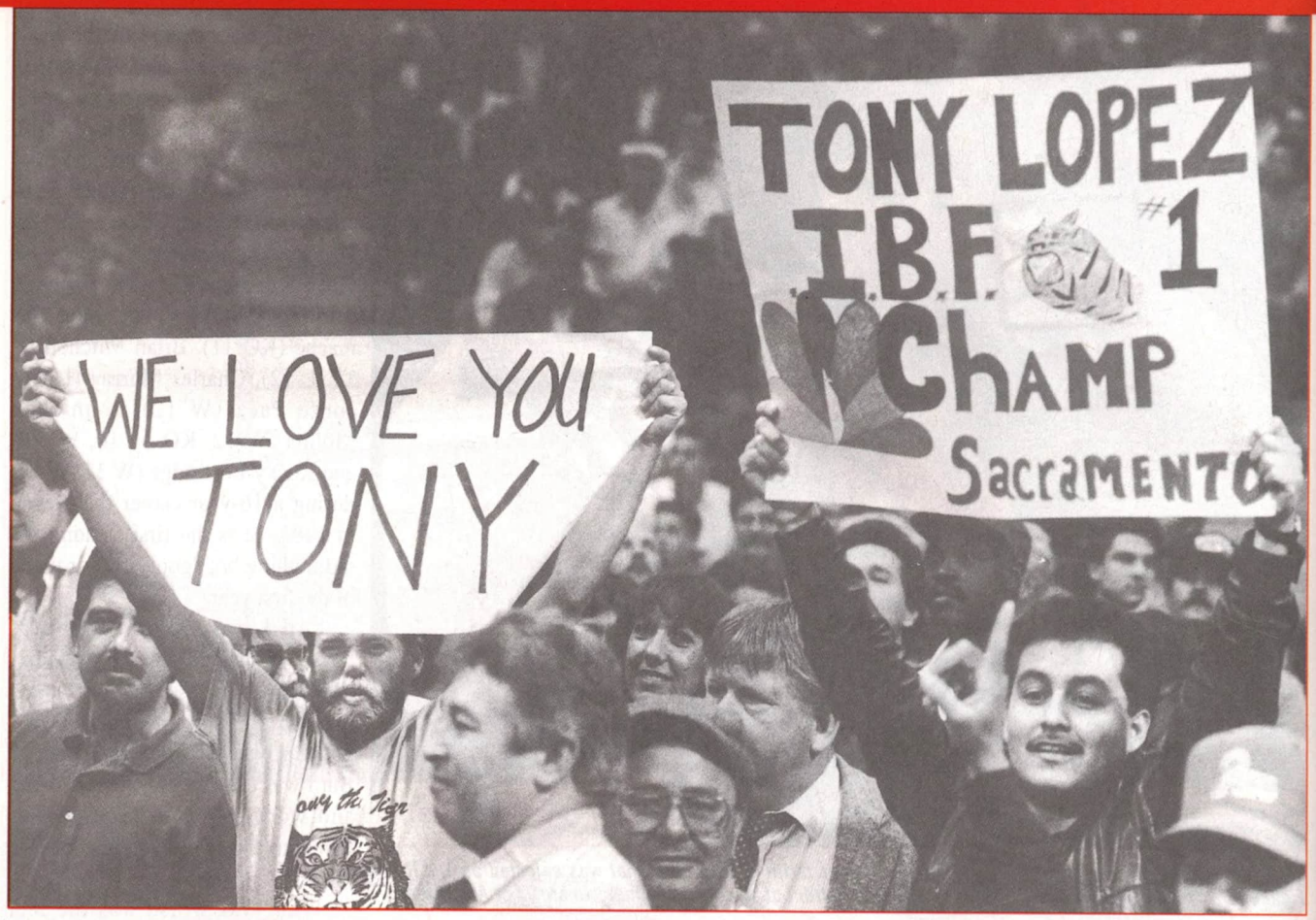
"Spying on people was all right, but it just wasn't for me," said Lopez.

Besides, the fiercely independent former fighter didn't like working under someone else's license. All of his instincts told him he should be working for himself. Having heard that there was big money to be made in the bail bond business, he crammed for the state-licensing exam. He completed the two-hour test in 18 minutes—and failed.

"I was more nervous for that test than I ever was for a fight," Lopez admitted. "But I took the test again a week later, was in and out in 11 minutes—and passed."

Utilizing the experience Cathy had garnered with her own process-serving business, the Lopezes opened their doors a month later.

"My father always told me to crawl before you walk," said Lopez, who admits to not heeding his father's advice when



Lopez always enjoyed great support in Sacramento, where he regularly drew large crowds, including the more than 15,000 who turned up for the Paez fight. Lopez' popularity as a fighter has helped him a great deal in his post-boxing career. He admits to cultivating his celebrity status.

opening the business. "We hit the ground running, but things have turned out all right."

Although Lopez has a beloved eight-year-old daughter, Tatiana, from a previous relationship, he and Cathy are much too busy to think about adding any more family members to the fold. Business is good, but they are only looking to make it bigger and better. With 40-50 other local companies vying for business, competition is fierce. Staying on top, Lopez has learned, is not much different from staying on top as a titleholder.

"Everybody knows me from my boxing, and everyone in jail wants to get out, so the name recognition helps," he explained. "But that only goes so far. We are very fair and we don't try to kill anybody (request unreasonable collateral fees). That's what people remember more than me being a boxer."

Lopez' reputation as a fighter also results in him receiving no shortage of calls from young fighters looking for him to train or manage them. Because he would like to someday immerse himself in boxing management, none of the calls go unreturned. He recently took three fighters to Las Vegas for a tryout for *The Contender* reality television show.

"I get calls from some pretty good fighters, as well as some yahoos that can't fight at all," said Lopez. "The only people that call me more than fighters are bounty hunters. Sometimes it seems to me that everyone wants to be a boxer or a bounty hunter. Those jobs only look glamorous. If these people had any idea how much work was involved, they'd drop the idea pretty quick."

Now 41 and a rock-solid 200 pounds, brought about by two hours of daily body-building, Lopez is a man at peace with his past and his present. He is a revered member of his hometown community, where he engaged in 40 of his 59 fights. Another 11 were fought in nearby Stateline and Reno, Nevada. As happy as he was having such local support, he is proud of the fact that he didn't hesitate to take on Gamache, Thobela, Chavez, and Murray in their respective hometowns of Portland, Maine, Sun City, South Africa, Monterrey, Mexico, and Rochester, New York. In his heyday Lopez was a television staple, and had no shortage of six-figure paydays. His parents, Sal Jr., a lumber company machinist, and Rachel, always taught him to not only be the best, but to also always strive to be better. He lived by that credo as a fighter, and he's living by it as a businessman.

"People always think it was easy fighting at home," he said. "For me it was always easier on the road. There was no pressure. I used to bring more than 10,000 people into the Arco Arena. That many people rooting for you—that's pressure."

The way Lopez remembers it, there was never more pressure than when he fought Molina, whom he beat twice, and Lockridge, with whom he engaged in THE RING's 1988 Fight of the Year, at home.

"Looking back, maybe I should've fought more Joe Schmoes. Many of my

Not all of Lopez' big victories came on home turf where he fought 40 times. He used this right hand and others to take the WBA lightweight title away from Joey Gamache via 11th-round TKO in Gamache's hometown of Portland, Maine, in October 1992.

opponents were the toughest guys around. Those guys were bad dudes."

Oddly enough, while Lopez' bitterest memories stem from a promotional relationship gone awry, he has nothing but high praise for Don King, who promoted five of his fights and treated him better than he could ever have imagined.

"Don is a businessman and I was a businessman, even as a boxer," said Lopez. "My dealings with him were always above board. He always paid me exactly what he said he would; everything was first class. In the boxing world everyone gets taken care of but the boxers, but nobody respected me more as a fighter than Don did."

As a bail bondsman, Lopez tries to treat his clients with the same amount of respect. Refusing to view them as criminals, he abides by a personal cannon that mandates that they are, above all else, his clients, and should therefore be treated as such.

"A lawyer will tell you every client deserves a good defense," said Lopez. "If a court says someone deserves bail, it is my business to provide it. It's not up to me to cast judgment or decide whether they're guilty or innocent. In my business, everyone is innocent until proven guilty. It has to be that way."

All in all, Lopez' life is good. His business has blossomed through his reputation as a straight shooter, much like the status he enjoys on the celebrity golf circuit—playing alongside such revered athletes as Joe Montana, Ken Stabler, Eric Dickerson, and Gerry Cooney—which was garnered through his limitless sense of charity to those less fortunate than himself.

"I was an old-school fighter, and I'm an old-school person," said Lopez. "When I was boxing, I wasn't popular just because I was from Sacramento. I used to go to all black, all white, and Mexican clubs and parties just to make my presence known. I cultivated my celebrity status, and worked hard to earn respect. I'm doing the same with my business. I'm here everyday, working the phones, talking s___, and making money. It's good to be an extrovert, but sometimes I just wish there'd be more of an adrenaline rush. That's the only thing I miss." ■

Robert Mladinich is a New York-based freelance writer and a regular contributor to this magazine.

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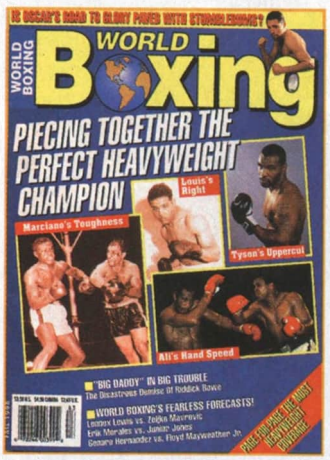

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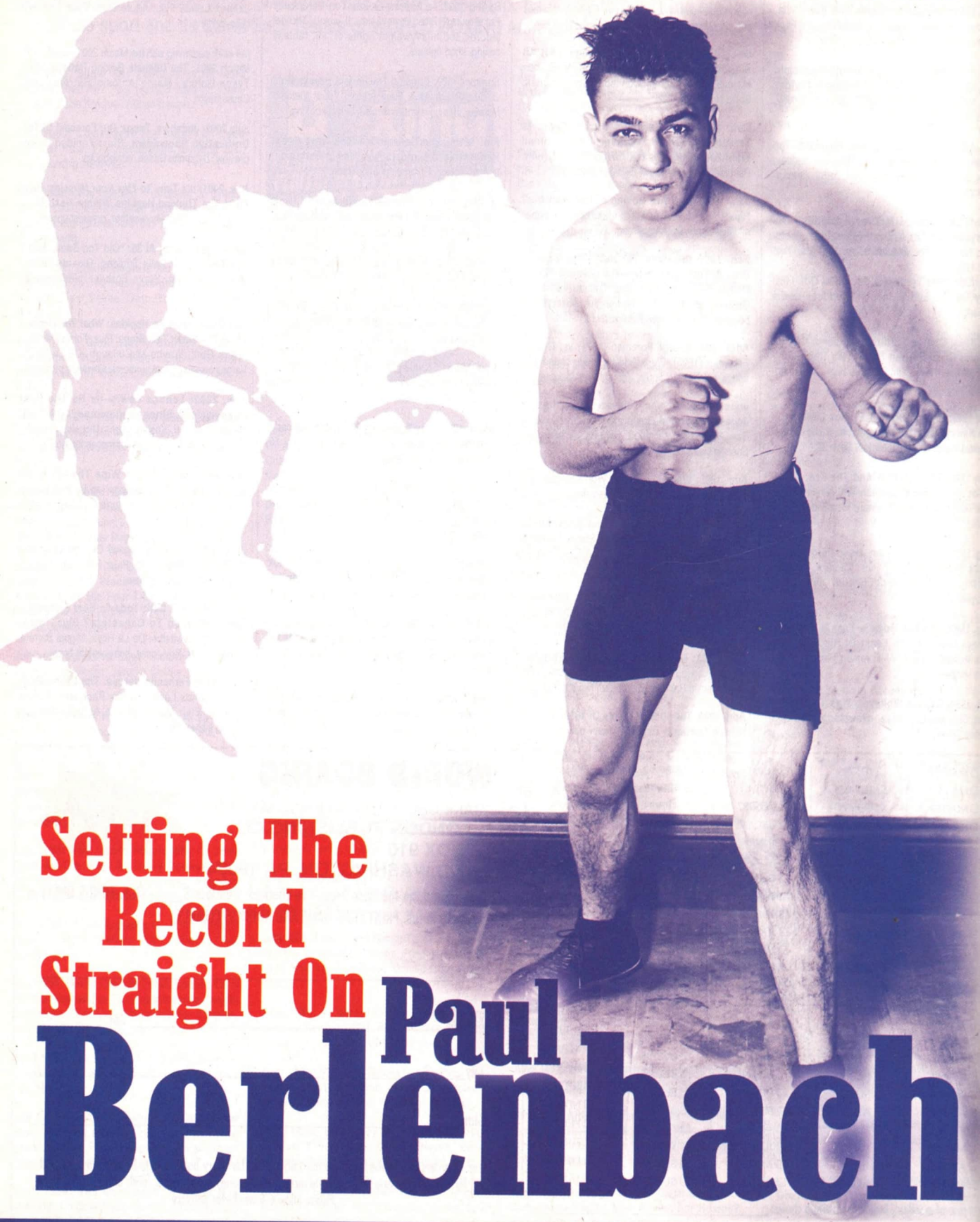
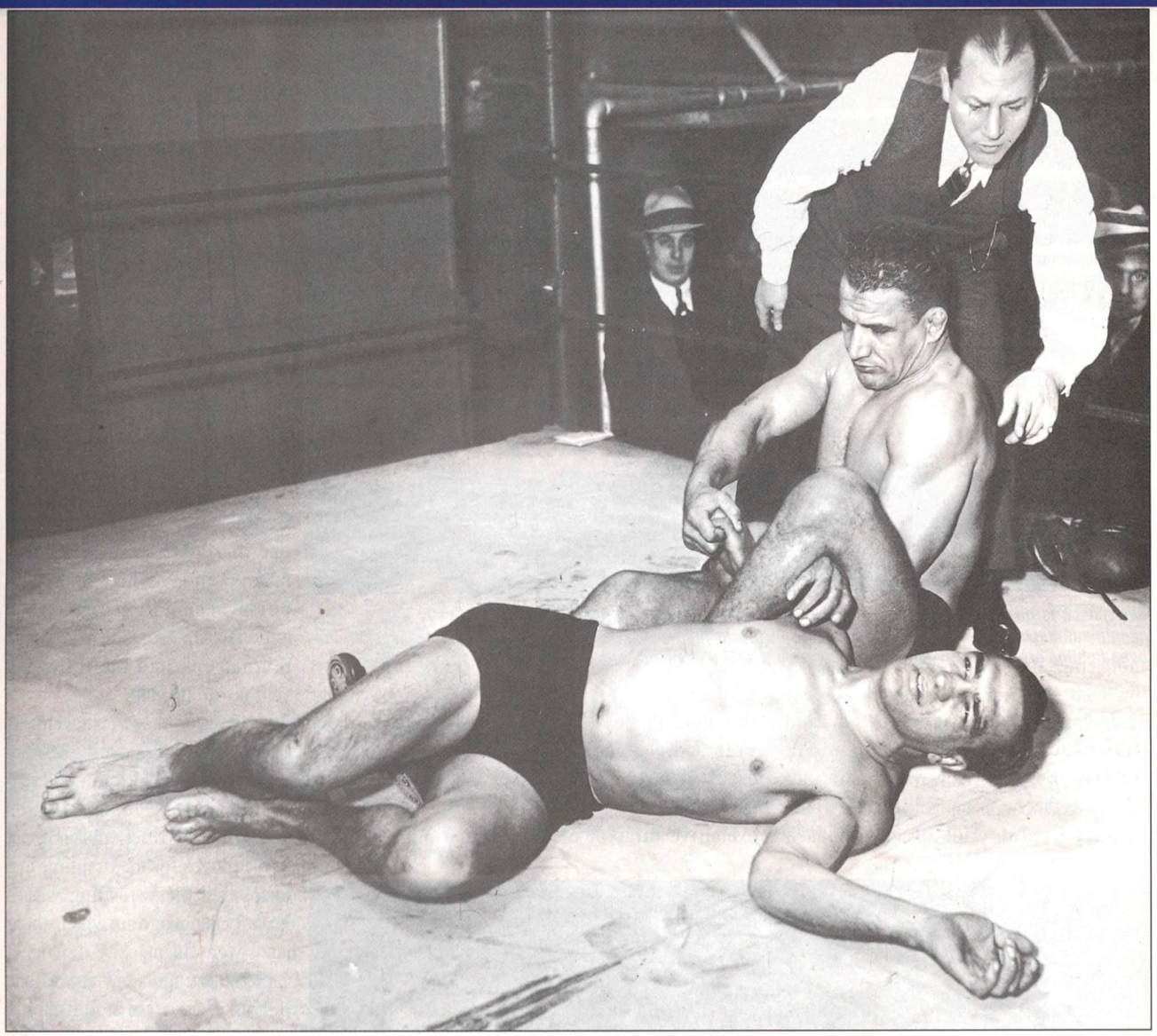


Setting The Record Straight On Paul Berlenbach



Wrestling was Berlenbach's first sporting love, and his decision to box professionally instead was fueled primarily by money. Berlenbach is seen here caught in an arm lock from Ray Steele during a training session, as boxing legend Benny Leonard referees.

By Pete Ehrmann

Even after you cross out the Olympic wrestling medal he didn't win and one or two other clinkers on his resume, there's still plenty of gold in the legend of Paul Berlenbach. Without the hysteria caused by the brick-fisted light heavyweight champion known as "Paralyzing Paul" and "The Astoria Assassin," boxing would've contributed considerably less din to the Roaring '20s.

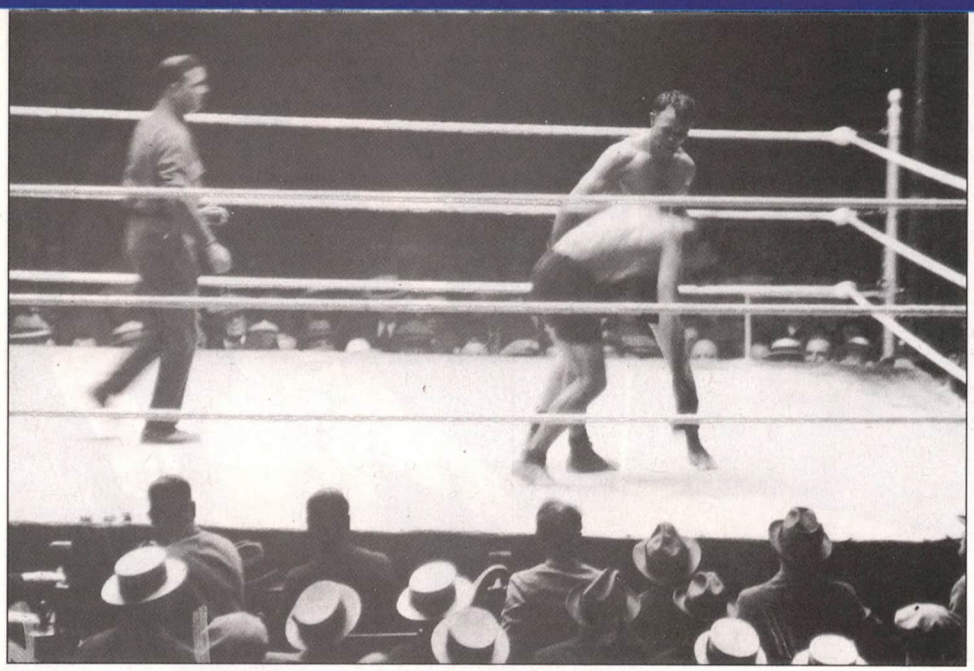
Sportswriter Hype Igoe referred to the angular Berlenbach as the "belting beauty," but in his photos there is an unmistakable flinty, almost feral quality to Berlenbach underscored by contemporary descriptions of him as "phlegmatic," "slow-thinking," and "dour." That's entirely understandable against the backdrop of Berlenbach's formative years, which he spent in a cocoon of silence.

According to various sources, Berlenbach either came into this world on February 18, 1901, without the power to speak or hear, or he lost those faculties after a bout of scarlet fever when he was just a few years old.

Growing up deaf and mute in Astoria, across the East River from New York City, Berlenbach was withdrawn and isolated. That ended with a bang when he was 15 and brushed against a live electrical wire. The shock he received knocked him unconscious, and when he came to, Berlenbach could hear. The ability to speak followed soon after.

But communicating with his hands was second-nature to him, and Berlenbach's articulateness using that mode reached a whole new level after he was befriended by Nat Pendleton, an amateur wrestling champion who started Berlenbach training on the mat at the New York Athletic Club.

In 1920, they made the U.S. Olympic wrestling team together. In the 175-pound freestyle finals at the Olympic Trials on July 13, Berlenbach's decision win over Lt. F.W. Maichle of the U.S. Navy came with some controversy. "Charges of professionalism were made by Navy men against Berlenbach, and the coach announced he would carry the protest to the American Olympic Committee," reported *The New York Times*.



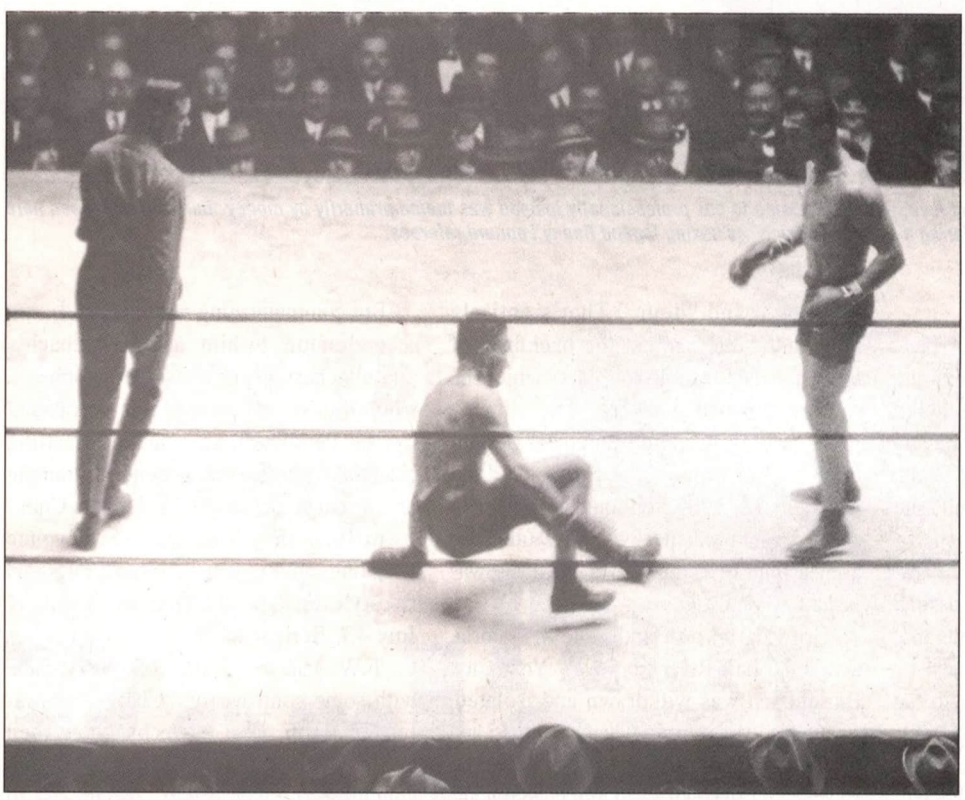
Berlenbach is on the receiving end against Mike McTigue in this picture, but he would rally back to win a unanimous decision over McTigue and claim the world light heavyweight title. "The Astoria Assassin" had been fighting professionally for less than two years before becoming champion.

The protest was disallowed, and Berlenbach went to the Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium. However, contrary to assertions that he won a gold medal, which first appeared in print after Berlenbach won the light heavyweight boxing title in 1925 and have been endlessly repeated over the years, he never even wrestled in the Games. According to Mike Chapman, executive director of the International Wrestling Institute and Museum, Berlenbach suffered an injury aboard the ship carrying the U.S. athletes to Europe and was unable to compete.

"All I can say about him being called an Olympic gold medalist," said Chapman from the museum in Newton, Iowa, "is that once an error appears in print it is easy for it to be perpetuated by lazy writers. Someone probably read that Berlenbach was an Olympian and added once that he was a gold medalist, and then the falsehood continued to bloom."

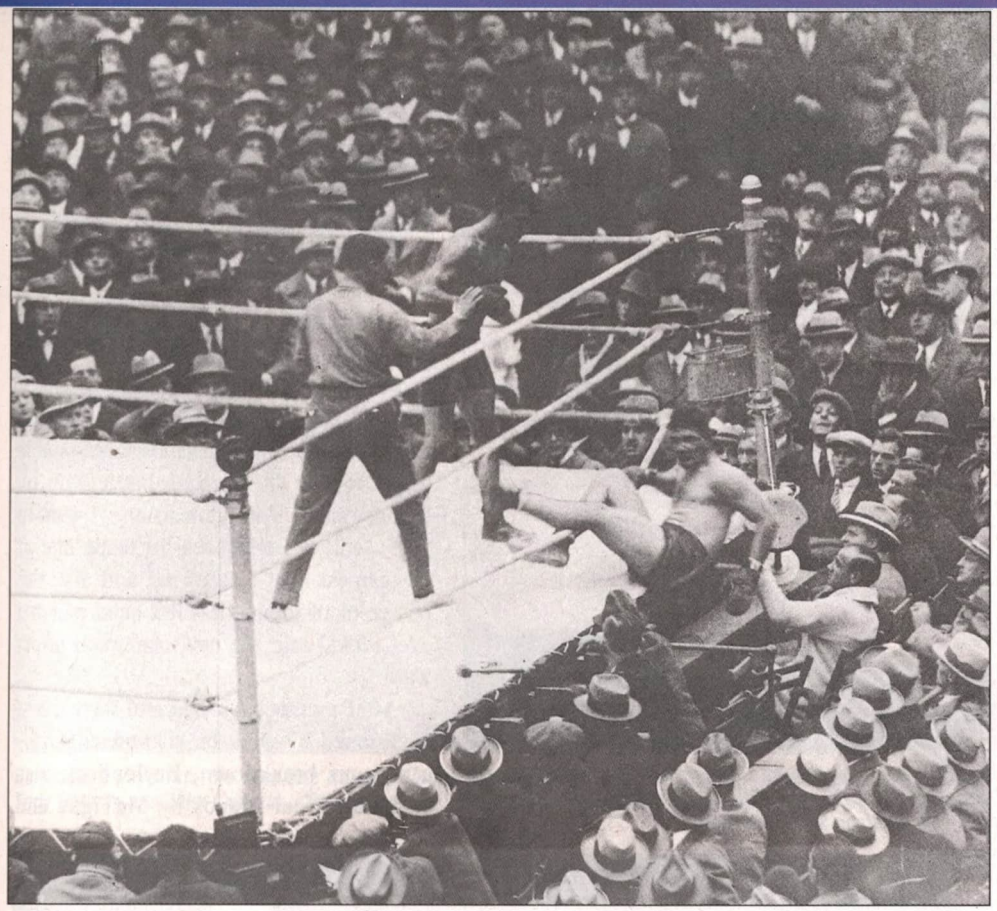
Even without a gold medal, Berlenbach was unquestionably one of America's best amateur matmen. In 1922, he won the 175-pound championship in the national Amateur Athletic Union tournament, and the following year he did it again.

Sometime between those achievements was when Dan Hickey, the boxing instructor at the NYAC and onetime trainer of three-division boxing champion Bob Fitzsimmons, persuaded Berlenbach to put on the gloves for the first time and discovered that wrestling wasn't the only language in which those hands were fluent.



Many critics didn't expect Berlenbach's reign to last long, but those doubters were hushed when Berlenbach dropped and ultimately stopped highly regarded Jimmy Slattery in his first title defense, on September 11, 1925, at Yankee Stadium. The end came at 1:28 of the 11th round.

Some accounts say it was one of Hickey's prized contenders whose lights were put out by Berlenbach's awkward clouts; others say it was the old man himself. Whether he saw or felt it, Hickey was so blown away by Berlenbach's power that from then on Berlenbach was up to his ears in two sports, and a standout at both—but not, however, on the same weekend in April of 1923. Like his Olympic medal, reports that Berlenbach won the national AAU wrestling and boxing light heavyweight titles within hours of one another are fiction probably whipped up by a press agent for whom it somehow wasn't remarkable enough that the same month he repeated as national 175-pound wrestling champion, Berlenbach made it to the semifinals of the national AAU boxing tournament



Berlenbach blasts Emilio "King" Solomon through the ropes during a non-title fight in New York in October '25. The heavy-punching champ would prevail by ninth-round TKO.

in Boston. The New Yorker lost a decision to eventual champion Harry Fay of Pittsburgh.

Though wrestling was his first love, the opportunity to make more money faster by punching people for a living put Berlenbach in the opposite corner from Jimmy Roberts in his pro debut on October 4, 1923. He knocked out Roberts in one, and as the kayos quickly added up, New York fans and the press went nuts over the plodding slugger writers liked to call a "reformed wrestler."

After Berlenbach stopped veteran Frank Carbone in the sixth round for his seventh straight knockout, THE RING'S Eddie Borden wrote that he ranked below only heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey and his top challenger, Harry Wills, on the list of boxing's hardest punchers.

Berlenbach credited his power to the long hours he spent whacking the heavybag. "I was taught never to stand full face with an opponent," he said in a 1962 interview. "One should stand at an angle so that he can get full leverage behind his punches as I did. I punched with my whole body behind my blows."

"Some fellows who have fought him say he slams so hard that a blow on the arm from Paul will paralyze the muscles for at least three rounds," wrote columnist Westbrook Pegler. Hence the "Paralyzing Paul" sobriquet.

Ten-thousand frenzied customers jammed Madison Square Garden to watch Berlenbach take out Carbone, and a month later 12,817 watched Berlenbach stop Young Fisher in six rounds.

Even promoter Tex Rickard was stunned when all the reserved seats for Berlenbach's fight against Jack Delaney sold out two days before the March 14, 1924, match at the Garden. "Never in his career as a promoter had he seen such an early 'sellout' in a bout in which no championship was involved," said *The Times*.

In what was considered an upset, Delaney, who'd been fighting pro since 1921 and had beaten Tommy Loughran in his last fight, knocked out Berlenbach in four rounds.

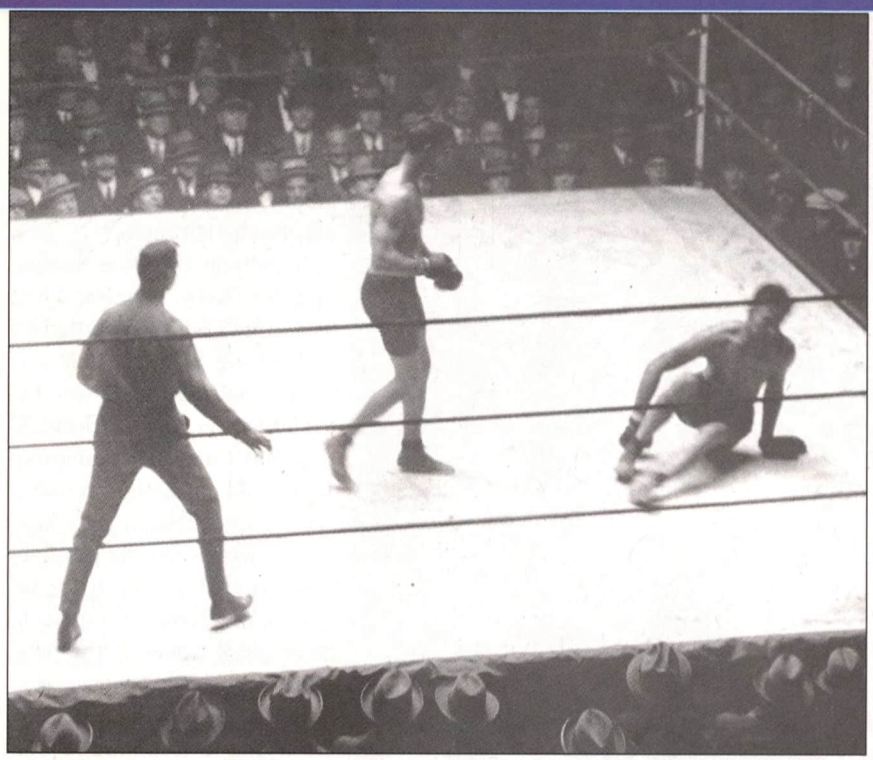
The comeback—and another kayo streak—started less than three weeks later, but his loss to Delaney had a cold shower effect on Berlenbach's earlier red-hot rooters in the press, who now regarded his plodding style as too one-dimensional and said he relied too much on his left hook.

Amidst the knockouts that got only lukewarm reviews, there were draws with Augie Ratner and Young Stribling that reporters said were really won by the other guys. After Berlenbach took out Canadian champion Jack Reddick in eight rounds, Nat Fleischer, founder and editor of THE RING, said the problem was that Hickey was "trying to make him a boxer, and as such he is a total failure ... Paul is a fighter and should continue as a fighter and forget all his trainers are trying to teach him about boxing. Then and only then will Berlenbach be the Berlenbach of the past year."

Whether he was going about it the wrong way or not, Berlenbach kept winning. He knocked out former light heavy champ Battling Siki on March 13, 1925, and then went on to win the 175-pound title by decision over Mike McTigue on May 30. *The New York Times* predicted a brief reign for "the Astoria lad [who] can boast only of strength."

It didn't help matters when both Berlenbach and Young Marullo were thumbed out of the ring by the referee for not trying in the former's first fight as champion. "He is a terrible bust as a titleholder," declared Eddie Borden after the non-title bout. "Looks like he'll never do."

All that changed after Berlenbach stopped 21-year-old Jimmy Slattery in 11 rounds in a title defense on September 11, 1925. Slattery was a boxing wonder for whom greatness was predicted by most fight pundits. But the ex-wrestler wore him down and, according to *The Times'* James Dawson, "established himself as a greater champion than many have given him credit for being. He still is sluggish and awkward, but he was faster against the fleet-footed Slattery than he has been in many other ring engagements and the result demonstrated that Berlenbach is effective.



Berlenbach's number-one rival was Jack Delaney, pictured here rising from the canvas in the second of their four meetings. The December 11, 1925, bout, the only one in the series that Berlenbach won, opened what was then the new Madison Square Garden.

He attains his objective regardless of the method."

The win sure did a lot for the champion's confidence. "In another year I expect to see [Jack] Dempsey in the corner opposite of me and the heavyweight championship in my hands when the bell rings," Berlenbach said afterward.

Obviously that didn't happen, but Berlenbach completed his rehabilitation by getting up from a fourth-round knockdown for a convincing points win over Delaney in a fight so big it inaugurated the new Madison Square Garden on December 11, 1925.

Suddenly the light heavyweight champion was the toast of boxing. "The only titleholder who seems to fear no one," was how Fleischer described Berlenbach. Igoe praised him for putting "kick into his division at last," and said that while Berlenbach "may have his shortcomings as a finished boxer ... he has the heart of a tiger and the courage of his convictions. He thinks he can whip any man in the world at his weight."

Berlenbach was disabused of any heavyweight title aspirations by Johnny Risko, who knocked him down and won a decision in their March 19, 1926, bout. But The Astoria Assassin rebounded to take a resounding decision over Young Stribling in a 15-round light heavyweight title match, and that set the stage for what was the most anticipated fight in New York City since the Dempsey-Firpo demolition derby three years earlier.

The rubber match between Berlenbach and Jack Delaney on July 16 was so huge that 5,000 people turned out just to watch them weigh in. Forty-thousand fans packed Ebbets Field, with thousands more unable to get in, for the exciting battle won by Delaney on a clear-cut decision. "I want to give credit to Berlenbach for being one of the gamest men in the ring and also the possessor of the hardest left hand punch I ever took," said the new champion afterward.

After a comeback win and then a rest occasioned by what he acknowledged as a nervous breakdown, Berlenbach was stopped in four rounds by McTigue and

Seven years after his retirement, Berlenbach shows some of his old moves to then-light heavyweight champion Billy Conn. You won't find two 175-pound champs more opposite in style than slickster Conn and pure puncher Berlenbach. Both are now immortalized in the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Berlenbach hops into the Madison Square Garden ring in 1973 along with fellow retired legends Tony Galento and Jake LaMotta. "Paralyzing Paul" lived another 12 years before passing at age 84.

retired. That lasted just a few months, and then Berlenbach came back for several brutally exciting fights that proved he had nothing left but the kind of guts that made fans stand on their chairs screaming his name. Against heavyweight Bob Lawson at the Garden on July 28, 1927, Berlenbach was floored by the first punch he took, but got up to slog and slug his way to a seventh-round kayo in what *The Times* called "as great an exhibition of courage and gameness as has been seen in any ring." Berlenbach needed smelling salts before he could give a postfight radio interview.

"Former Wrestler Easy For Irishman" headlined the *Milwaukee Journal* after middleweight champion Mickey Walker trounced Berlenbach that November, and then Delaney knocked him out in six two weeks later.

Not long after that, just as the New York boxing commission was getting ready to lift his boxing license ("Paulie, one of the greatest scrappers that ever lived, is almost punch-drunk," reported THE RING), the onetime amateur grappling champion returned to the wrestling mat for several matches.

But after three years out of boxing, he returned to that ring in 1931. He needed the money. A woman named Claire Feidner had sued Berlenbach for breach of promise, claiming he'd promised to marry her. In court it came out that a Berlenbach trust fund originally containing $150,000 was down to $20,000. She got $3,500 of that in a judgment against the ex-champion, who finally quit boxing and wrestling for good in '33. He died at age 84 on September 30, 1985.

Berlenbach, who finished with a record of 39-8-3 (33) with 1 no-decision and 1 no-contest, was voted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2001. He would probably be just as tickled, if not more so, to find his picture on the wall in Mike Chapman's museum in rural Iowa, in a section called "Tough Guys."

"Paul Berlenbach was truly one of America's greatest warrior athletes," said Chapman, "and his story is a source in inspiration to anyone who has ever had to work hard to overcome obstacles in life."

Even if not quite everything written about him has been entirely true. ■

Pete Ehrmann is a freelance writer living in West Allis, Wisconsin, and a regular contributor to this magazine.

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

James Toney W 12 Rydell Booker
Wladimir Klitschko Tech. Win 5 DaVarryl Williamson
Yamplier Azcuy KO 1 Marcellus Brown
Tony Thompson W 10 Vaughn Bean
Stacy Frazier KO 1 Duncan Dokiwari
David Bostice W 10 Cisse Salif
Michael Sprott KO 1 Robert Sulgan
Riddick Bowe KO 2 Marcus Rhode
Oliver McCall KO 3 Vernon Woodward
Malcolm Tann W 8 Jason Gavern
Taras Bidenko W 10 Julius Francis
Orlin Norris KO 6 Ken Murphy
Saul Montana W 10 Gabe Brown
Kevin Johnson W 8 Robert Wiggins
Peter Okhello KO 2 Mosese Kavika
Billy Zumbrun KO 10 Billy Douglas
Oliver Rubin Tech. Win 9 Zoltan Petranyi
Tomasz Bonin W 10 Sergey Dychkov
Patrice L'Heureux W 8 Garing Lane
Chris Koval W 8 Joe Lenart
Roger Izonritei KO 4 Oscar Talemira
Alexander Dimitrenko KO 2 Andy Sample
Preston Hartzog W 6 James Porter
Roman Greenberg W 6 Vitaly Shkraba
Mario Preskar KO 1 Danny Wayland
B.J. Flores KO 1 Cruz Quintana
Butterbean W 4 Ritchie Goosehead

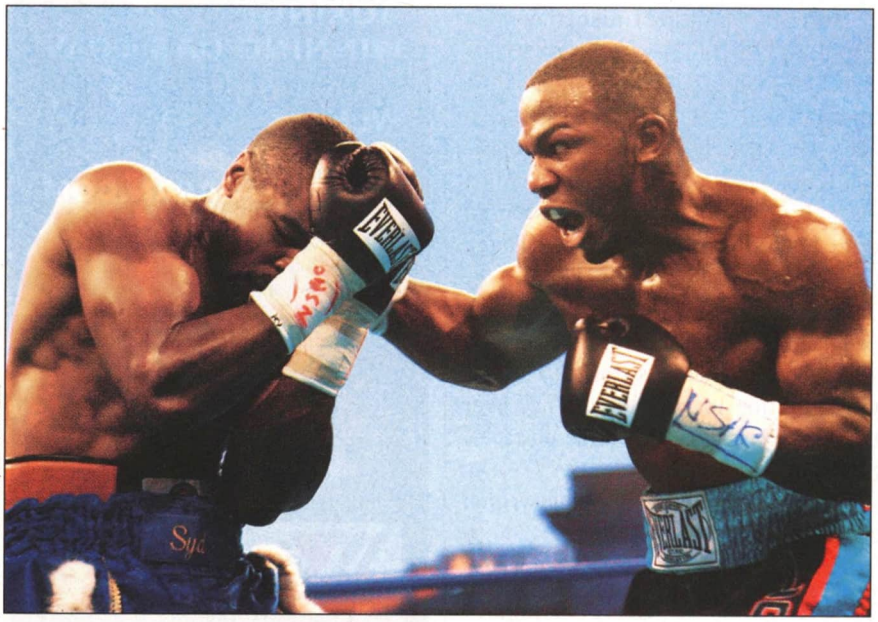


PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

Jeff Lacy claims a super middleweight belt by stopping Syd Vanderpool

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Carl Thompson KO 5 David Haye
Steve Cunningham KO 4 Forrest Neal
Silvio Branco W 10 Ramdane Serdjane
Danny Santiago KO 4 Elvir Muriqi
Julian Letterlough KO 2 Eric Starr
Krzysztof Wlodarczyk W 10 Joseph Marwa
Grigory Drozd W 10 Jason Robinson
Vadim Tokarev KO 5 Troy Beets
Alexander Petkovic W 8 Damon Reed
Lubos Suda KO 6 Leri Okhanashivili
Ehinomen Ehikhamenor KO 2 Charles Brown
Jacqui Frazier-Lyde W 10 Mary Ann Almager

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Glen Johnson KO 9 Roy Jones *(Retains IBF Title)*
Zsolt Erdei W 12 Alejandro Lakatus
Rico Hoye W 12 Montell Griffin
Mario Veit W 8 Dane Mock
Greg Wright KO 1 Troy Weaver
Tomasz Adamek W 8 Ismail Abdoul
Rocky Smith W 8 Tim Bowe
Matthew Barney W 6 Simeon Cover
Laila Ali KO 3 Gwendolyn O'Neil

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Jeff Lacy KO 8 Syd Vanderpool *(Wins Vacant IBF Title)*
Howard Eastman W 10 Jerry Elliott
Danny Green KO 5 Omar Gonzalez
Librado Andrade KO 2 Vitali Kopytko
Carl Froch KO 1 Damon Hague
Christian Cruz KO 9 Enrique Ornelas
Otis Grant W 10 Mark Woolnough
Robert Stieglitz W 12 Yuri Tsarenko
Daniel Lovett KO 12 Enrique Campos
Denis Inkin KO 7 Julio Cesar Vasquez
Kelly Pavlik KO 2 Carlton Holland

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Bernard Hopkins KO 9 Oscar De La Hoya *(Retains World Title)*
Felix Trinidad KO 8 Ricardo Mayorga
Felix Sturm W 12 Robert Frazier
Mariano Carrera KO 10 Jorge Sclarandi

Scott Dann KO 6 Steven Bendall
Jerson Ravelo W 10 Muhammad Said
Troy Rowland W 8 Anthony Ivory
Sechew Powell W 10 George Armenta
Jim Rock W 6 Matt Galer
Ronald Hearns W 4 Darren Foss

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Kassim Ouma W 12 Verno Phillips
(Wins IBF Title)
Daniel Santos Tech. Win 9
Antonio Margarito
Travis Simms W 12 Bronco McKart
Rodney Jones W 12 Michael Lerma
Kofi Jantuah KO 1 Marco Antonio Rubio
Wayne Alexander KO 2 Takaloo
Luis Collazo W 10 Felix Flores
Nurhan Suleymanoglu KO 9
Thomas Davis
Shannan Taylor KO 8 Sergio Acuna
Mihaly Kotai W 12 Denny Dalton
Paul Williams KO 1 Javier Valadez
Shinsuke Matsumoto W 10
Yukiharu Shinyashiki
Jose Medina KO 2 Juan Cintron
Vaughn Alexander W 4 Michael Melvin

WELTERWEIGHTS

Zab Judah KO 1 Wayne Martell
Ray Oliveira W 12 Hicklet Lau
Steve Forbes W 10 Steve Quinonez
Demetrius Hopkins W 8
Ubaldo Hernandez
Antonio Diaz W 8 Alfred Kotey
Ruben Fuchu W 10 Christopher Henry
Vyacheslav Senchenko W 12
Cesar Alberto Leiva
Pakphum Chengphonak W 12
Nonoy Gonzales
Mark Suarez KO 3 Brad Jensen
Michael Jennings KO 5 Chris Saunders
Dairo Esalas W 8 Terrance Cauthen
Tadashi Yuba KO 2
Chainarai Eausampan
Dimitriy Salita W 8 Ruben Galvan
Ray Sanchez KO 1 Mike Dobbs
Paul Delgado W 8 George Walker
Matthew Hatton W 8 Lee Armstrong
David Jackson KO 1 Richard Conchas
Mary Jo Sanders KO 3
Shakurah Witherspoon

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Miguel Cotto KO 6 Kelson Pinto
Ricky Hatton KO 5 Mike Stewart
Artur Grigorian KO 4 Laszlo Herczeg
Arturo Morua W 10 Omar Weis
Sirimongkol Singmanasak W 8
Fernando Montilla
Ernesto Zavala KO 7 Hector Quiroz
Genaro Rios KO 6 Noel Gomez
Daudy Bahari KO 2
Plaisakda Singwangcha
Al Gonzales W 8 Derrick Moon
Almazbek Raimkulov KO 2
Jose Luis Soto Karass

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Koji Arisawa KO 4 Akihiko Igarashi
Miguel Angel Huerta KO 5
Marco Angel Perez
Oscar Leon KO 2 Raul Sandoval
Antonio Cermeno KO 4 Jose Gil Atencio
Dennis Laurente W 12 Chikashi Inada
Laszlo Bognar W 10 Laszlo Komjathi
Andrei Kudriavtsev W 12
Antonio Joao Bento
Koba Gogoladze W 8 Marteze Logan
Janos Nagy KO 2 Aurel Popa

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Michael Gomez KO 6 Leva Kirakosyan
Humberto Soto No-Contest 3 Jorge Solis
Vicente Mosquera KO 8 Edinson Garcia
Jorge Linares KO 1 Sung-Hoon Park
Francisco Dianzo KO 7 Martin Sanchez

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Juan Manuel Marquez W 12
Orlando Salido
(Retains WBA & IBF Titles)
Yoddamrong Sithyodthong W 6
Edward Escriber
Wayne McCullough KO 2 Mike Juarez
Gary St. Clair KO 11 Theophilus Quaye
Cesar Figueroa KO 10 Jorge Martinez
Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym W 12 Wanjon Hai
Masanori Sugita KO 7 Sang-Chan Nah
Whyber Garcia W 12 Jose Pablo Estrella
Stephen Foster KO 9 Gary Thornhill
Fahsan 3K-Battery Tech. Draw 3
Roberto Moreno
Cuauhtemoc Vargas D 8 Jaime Orrantia
Akinori Kanai KO 1
Singdam Montasaichol
Elio Rojas KO 1 Corey Goodwin

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Diego Morales W 10 Phillip Payne
Napapol Kiatisakchokchai KO 3
Adam Mwakyusa
Gabula Vabaza KO 1 Themba Tshicila
Nobuaki Naka KO 7 Kongsurin Sithsoei
Ryuichi Minoriyama W 10 Pedro Malco
Roger Gonzalez W 8 Anthony Martinez
Alex Escaner W 12 Reynald Tribo
Al Seeger W 8 Eric Aiken
Debind Thapa D 8 Juan Carlos Jacobo

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Veerapol Sahaprom W 12 Cecilio Santos
(Retains WBC Title)
Gerry Penalosa KO 2
Samingkao Chutipol
Malcolm Tunacao W 10 Bernard Uclos
Eiji Kojima W 10 Adolfo Landeros
Jose DeJesus Lopez KO 1 Wilmer Basora
Simone Maludrottu W 12 Frederic Patrac
Samuel Lopez W 10 Roberto Lopez
Tomas Rojas KO 10 Moises Castro

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Katsushige Kawashima W 12 Raul Juarez
(Retains WBC Title)
Ivan Hernandez KO 8 Mark Johnson
Medgoen Singsurat KO 3 Joel Rodrigo
Carlos Fajardo KO 3
Eduardo Ray Marquez
Waenpetch Chuwatana W 12 Shin Ogata
Pramuansak Posuwan W 12
Allan Ranada
Sergio Santillan KO 8 Nelson Monte
Cristian Mijares KO 1 Javier Torres

FLYWEIGHTS

Rosendo Alvarez W 12 Beibis Mendoza
(Non-Title Bout)
Jose Lopez KO 11
Juan Alfonso Keb-Baas
Trash Nakanuma W 12 Noriyuki Komatsu
Alex Sanchez KO 1 Arturo Velazquez
Everardo Morales KO 6 Ulises Cadena
Nkqubela Gwazela KO 11
Moruti Mthalane
Koki Kameda W 10 Daochai Sor Gogym
David Martinez W 8 Anthony Martinez
Elena Reid D 10 Regina Halmich

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Roberto Vasquez W 12 Freddy Beleno
Wandee Singwangcha KO 8
Ernesto Rubillar
Sizwe Sinyabi W 12 Vuyani Kheswa
Nobuaki Masuda W 10
Masato Hatakeyama

STRAWWEIGHTS

Muhammad Rachman W 12 Daniel Reyes
(Wins IBF Title)
Jose Luis Varela W 12 Miguel Tellez
Carlos Melo W 12 Alejandro Padilla

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The RING

FIGHTER of the MONTH

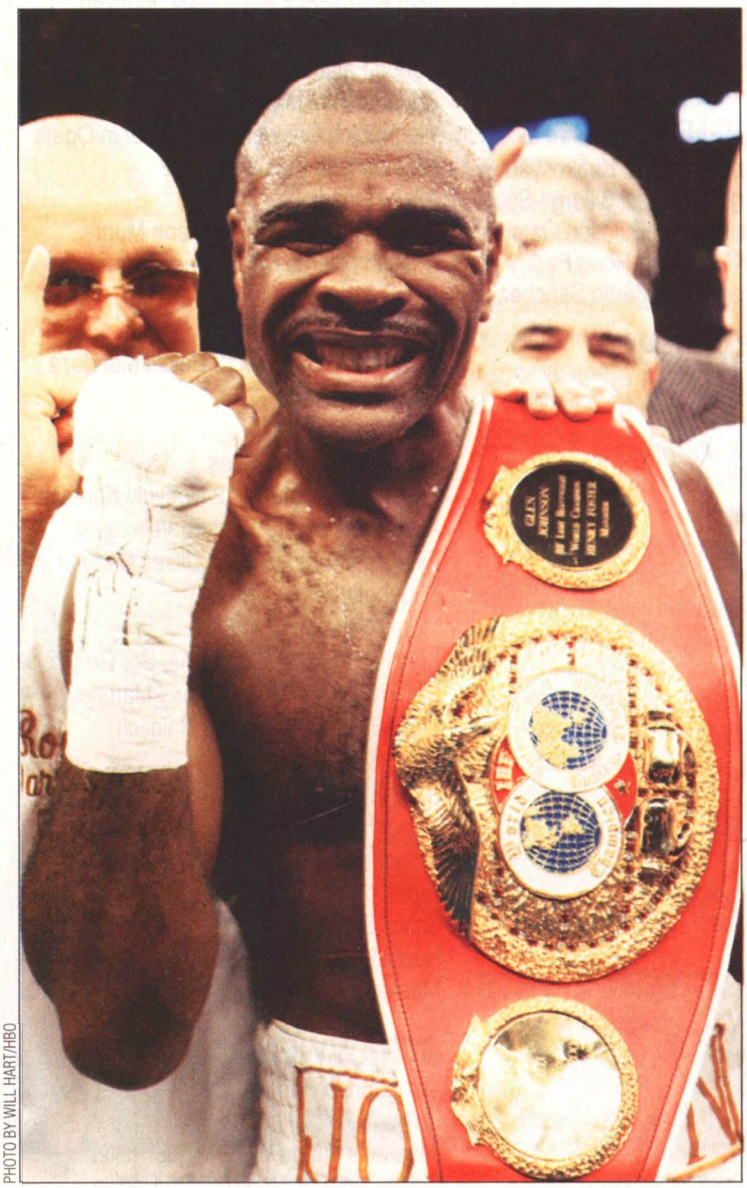

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Going into the fight, it wasn't about Glen Johnson at all. It was all about Roy Jones, as he tried to come back from the first knockout loss of his Hall of Fame career. And after the fight, it still wasn't about Glen Johnson. Nearly all of the talk in the mainstream media centered on Jones and the question of whether he would ever fight again.

But when it came time to pick the Fighter of the Month, it wasn't about Jones at all. Finally, it was all about Glen Johnson.

Jones didn't lay himself down on the canvas. It was Johnson who put him there with a right hand that capped off a dominant performance. Johnson did everything right: He preyed on Jones' flagging confidence by pouncing on him at the opening bell; he kept the pressure coming so that Jones could never find his rhythm; he brilliantly outjabbed Jones whenever the fighters were an arm's length away from each other; he increased Jones' doubts by taking the former champion's best blows to the head and body; and when the time was right, he took advantage of a gaping hole in Jones' defense and flattened him.

Maybe Jones is still the bigger name, the more intriguing celebrity. But Johnson is currently, without question, the better fighter.

• • • •

Glen Johnson

RINGSIDE REPORTS

James Toney W 12 Rydell Booker

Temecula, California: This contest pitted a fighter with two good arms against an opponent whose left arm was badly injured in the first round. It should have been stopped—in favor of the guy with one arm.

Over the course of 12 rounds, Toney, who tore his biceps while throwing a hook off a jab, busted up and just about annihilated the previously undefeated but untested Booker.

"Lights Out" faced Booker after an 11-month layoff necessitated by a training injury to his Achilles tendon. The biceps injury will prevent him from fighting for at least five months. Both injuries required surgery.

This victory made Toney the number-one contender in the WBC, meaning he has a mandate to face THE RING champion Vitali Klitschko, who also holds the WBC belt. The victory also made him unable, at least for now, to challenge the champ. Two steps forward, one back.

At 36, Toney can't afford all these career timeouts. Yet when he's healthy, he continues to fight like a young man. Against Booker he used excellent footwork, clever combinations, and an effortless defense that allowed him to save his energy while wearing down his opponent. Toney is a minimalist, using subtle little movements to slip and slide away from harm.

The taller Booker learned Toney is a uniquely skilled inside fighter and not exactly helpless when he gets distance. Booker, 23, was flabby at 220 pounds, having fought most of his career as a cruiserweight. Toney, 227, who started out as a middleweight, shows bigger muscles every time out. He may have overdone his weight training this time.

He utterly outclassed Booker, and most rounds were pretty much the same, with Toney effectively throwing a variety of right-hand-heavy combinations, particularly a right to the body followed by a right uppercut to the face. But Booker wouldn't quit, and neither his corner nor referee Raul Caiz Sr. (USA) recognized that the fight should be stopped. Booker, 22-1 (12), didn't have the kind of punch to turn it around and took unnecessary punishment. He went down in round eight, taking a knee for an eight-count.

Judge Marty Denkin (USA) had it 117-110, Frank Garza (USA) 120-107, and Barry Druxman (USA) 118-108.

Toney, 68-4-2 (43), is clearly one of the best heavyweights out there. But it remains to be seen whether he can grab and hold the title before age and injuries overtake him.

Television: Fox Sports Net

Promoter: Goossen-Tutor Promotions

(9-23-04)

Ivan Goldman

Wayne McCullough KO 2 Mike Juarez

Temecula, California: After 18 frustrating, often soul-searching months, "The Pocket Rocket" was relaunched, as McCullough, 126, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Belfast, Northern Ireland, blasted out Juarez, 126, Omaha, Nebraska, at 2:59 of the second round at the Pechanga

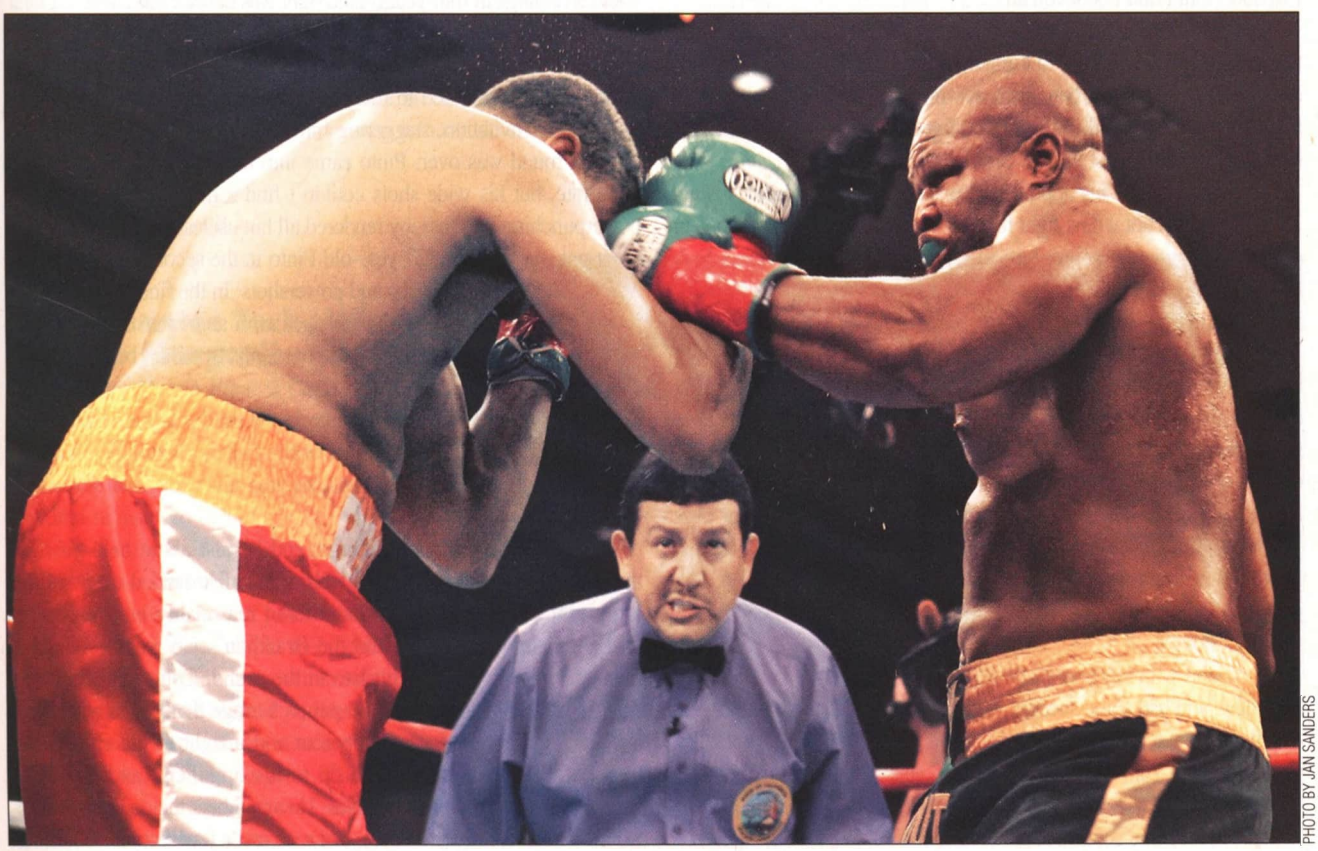

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Toney slips in a hook against overmatched Booker

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Comebacking McCullough clips trialhorse Juarez with a right

Resort and Casino. The featherweight bout was the chief support to James Toney's points victory over Rydell Booker.

McCullough, a former bantamweight titleholder, was fighting for the first time since his comprehensive points defeat against Scott Harrison, the worst experience of his fighting life. "That's forgotten now, done, gone," he insisted on the eve of climbing back in the ring. "People can say what they want. I'm 34 and I'm still here. If I'm done, I'm done. But I don't believe I am."

Teaming up for the first time with Freddie Roach, the respected trainer and fellow disciple of Eddie Futch, had helped to restore his confidence: "I know I'll benefit from working with Freddie and that's lifted a lot off my mind. As a person, I get on with him. As a trainer, his reputation is the best in the world."

The reputation of his opponent was much less formidable. Juarez, 23-15-2 (9), had not won a fight for four years and had been stopped in each of his preceding five, but, in his time, had encountered Erik Morales, Manuel Medina, Junior Jones, Jorge Paez, Bones Adams, and Jeff Fenech.

Anxious in the moments before the opening bell, McCullough began wildly, throwing his punches wide and struggling to gauge the distance. Juarez, 34, landed with a one-two and a few right hands, but to no great effect. Gradually, McCullough's relentless, pressuring style narrowed the space and the Irishman began to bang the body with hard hooks. A clash of heads near the end of the round caused a cut over McCullough's left eye. (It would require five stitches.) But between rounds, Roach urged McCullough to jab in, attack the body, and the job would be done. It soon was.

McCullough, 27-4 (18), backed Juarez into a neutral corner early in the second with left hooks and began to unload to the body. Juarez fired back and had some success, but McCullough just kept punching. The hooks created openings for his right hand, and with a perfectly placed straight right to the jaw with 10 seconds to go, Juarez was rocked badly. McCullough re-set himself and unleashed a powerful left hook to the jaw, and Juarez fell onto his back before referee Jose Cobian (USA), who began to take up the count, waved it over.

"I felt good being back in there. It was a big step. I'd even had to send out an open letter to promoters saying that I'd fight for nothing when it looked like nothing was happening for me," reflected McCullough, who now has a two-year deal with Dan Goossen. "I know Dan can make the fights which will secure me another world title shot. It will be 10 years next year since I held the bantamweight title and it would be great to challenge for a title again, probably at super bantamweight."

Promoter: Goossen-Tutor Promotions
(9-23-04)

Brian Doogan

Miguel Cotto KO 6 Kelson Pinto

Hato Rey, Puerto Rico: We haven't seen a Pinto destroyed this spectacularly since the 1970s. Puerto Rican phenom Cotto took another huge step toward the junior welterweight championship by obliterating the game but overmatched Pinto in a battle of undefeated 2000 Olympians at Coliseo Jose Miguel Agrelot, scoring knockdowns in the second and fifth rounds before forcing a stoppage with a third knockdown 32 seconds into round six.

With the win, Cotto claimed the vacant WBO title and avenged two amateur losses suffered against the Brazilian in 2000. Apparently, a lot can change in four years. This fight was never even close.

Cotto, 140, wobbled Pinto, 139, just 15 seconds into the fight with one of his trademark left hooks. The taller Pinto didn't take the hint, however, and continued to make his chin available, and Cotto didn't pass up the invitation, staggering him twice more with hooks before the first round was over. Pinto came into the fight with a 90 percent kayo rate, but his wide shots couldn't find a home, and his vaunted powerpunching was thereby rendered all but useless.

It got worse for the 27-year-old Pinto in the second, as Cotto continued to blast him with jabs and powershots. In the final minute of the round, Cotto, 23, sent Pinto to the deck with a counter right followed by a grazing hook, but the spindly, unsteady Brazilian beat the count and survived the round.

A left and a right both hurt Pinto in the third, but the visitor came back with his first meaningful shot of the fight, a right uppercut to the chin. Pinto's reward for that was a sizzling left hook from Cotto that knocked him off-balance.

Pinto never quit trying, though, and he just about held his own through most of the fourth and fifth rounds. He landed a few of his long right hands in the fourth and fared reasonably in a late-round exchange along the ropes, and the Brazilian's jab was becoming a minor factor in the fifth. But late in the round, Cotto exploded with offense, rocking Pinto with a 10-punch barrage that began with a left hook and ended with a left uppercut and a right to the chin. Pinto lurched forward, tried to grab on to his opponent, and ended up sprawled awkwardly on the canvas. He again beat the count of referee Roberto Ramirez (Puerto Rico), and with just a few seconds remaining in the round, Cotto didn't have time to finish him.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Pinto leans into a Cotto left

So instead Cotto just waited one minute, then proceeded to pounce on Pinto as if the fifth round had never ended. The Puerto Rican bounded out of his corner and lashed out with a heavy right hand that sent Pinto into the ropes. The crowd erupted as Cotto unloaded, eventually sending Pinto, 20-1 (18), to the floor. As Ramirez tried to make up his mind about whether to let the slaughter continue, Pinto's cornermen ran into the ring and made his mind up for him.

"I was very nervous, but I knew I'd win," said Cotto, 21-0 (17), after passing what had seemed like a dangerous test coming in. "I was in front of my own people, so I couldn't let them down. I know I can beat anybody."

Cotto is expected to fight one more time in '04, either in late-November or in December, though no opponents had been mentioned as of press time.

Television: HBO

Promoter: Top Rank

(9-11-04)

Daniel Santos Tech. Win 9 Antonio Margarito

Hato Rey, Puerto Rico: If Cotto's victory over Pinto was as conclusive as it gets, the co-featured bout between junior middleweights Santos and Margarito was the complete opposite. In a rematch to their July 2001 clash-of-heads no-contest, head-to-head collisions were again a decisive factor, but this time the fight went nine rounds instead of just one and local fighter Santos received a split technical decision that truly could have gone either way.

WBO beltholder Santos, 154, Puerto Rico, surprised nearly everyone by standing in front of Margarito, 153, Los Angeles, California, via Mexico, and trading blows, rather than adopting his usual hit-and-move strategy. The southpaw said later that he'd changed styles because his old style was preventing him from getting TV fights and big paydays. As it turned out, this style worked out well for him against the naturally smaller Margarito, a top-rated welterweight testing the 154-pound waters. Santos hurt Margarito with two long lefts in the opening round and proceeded to do the better work over the course of the first three stanzas.

Margarito, 26, began to get a foothold in the fourth, and it was his turn to hurt his opponent in the fifth when he turned southpaw (as he did often during the contest) and rocked the 28-year-old Santos with a right hook. The most crucial blow, however, came early in the sixth. That was when the aggressive Margarito led with his head and came away with a nasty gash around his right eye. Referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) called a timeout to examine the damage, and he and the ringside doctor both agreed the entertaining bout could continue on.

Aware that the fight could be stopped at any time, Margarito thundered ahead in the seventh and eighth, seeming to nudge into the lead. But Santos answered back in the ninth with a dynamite right hook, wobbling Margarito momentarily.

The fight still seemed very much up for grabs, but Margarito's cut was gradually worsening, and the referee wouldn't let him out of his corner when the bell rang to begin round 10. The winner would be determined on the cards, where judge John Stewart (USA) had Margarito up 86-85 (the same as THE RING), but was overruled by Samuel Conde (Puerto Rico) and Rocky Young (USA), who had it 86-85 and 87-84, respectively for Santos. Inconclusive as it was, it may have qualified as a career-best win for Santos, 29-2-1 (20) with 1 no-contest.

For Margarito, 30-4 (21) with 1 no-contest, the loss snapped an

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Bloody Margarito catches a left from Santos

eight-year, 22-fight unbeaten streak. The popular slugger said afterward that he would return to the welterweight division, where he still holds the WBO belt.

Television: HBO

Promoter: Top Rank

(9-11-04)

Ivan Hernandez KO 8 Mark Johnson

Memphis, Tennessee: Unknown outside of the most knowledgeable followers of the Mexican fight scene, Hernandez, 115, Ensenada, Mexico, exploded onto the big stage with a dramatic eighth-round knockout of Johnson, 115, Washington, D.C., at the FedEx Forum. The WBO junior bantamweight title fight was the chief support to Glen Johnson's stunning stoppage of Roy Jones and proved a worthy warmup act.

"I knew I had a very strong fighter in front of me, but I was determined to go toe-to-toe if I needed to and show that I'm a top-class fighter," said Hernandez. "I knew I could do it."

He stood toe-to-toe and never yielded. All the experience that Johnson had acquired throughout a distinguished career could not extinguish the Mexican's fire. From the opening bell, he came at the 33-year-old and did not stop until his victory had been achieved in the most emphatic terms. "I knew when I landed the first right hand that I could do it," underdog Hernandez reflected. "I knew with my heart, my determination, that I could win the fight."

That right hand staggered Johnson, who remained tentative for the remainder of the round, though he did come into the fight in the second and third rounds, looking dangerous when he threw the right uppercut in particular. But the 21-year-old Mexican proved willing to slug it out and trade hooks, making Johnson look ragged in the fourth round, hurting him again in close.

"Too Sharp" turned it around in the sixth, however, rocking Hernandez with an overhand right followed by a left and two right uppercuts. Gamely, Hernandez hung on to hear the bell. "They were hard punches and I felt them," he admitted. "But my heart told me to keep going."

His recovery in the seventh was complete when he landed a sharp counter right that put Johnson down on the seat of his pants. Johnson smiled at his corner and got up at referee Armando Garcia's count of eight. The bell intervened, and Johnson walked around the ring before returning to his corner, as if trying to get his legs back in working order. Hernandez was resolved, however, to wrecking Johnson's recovery. A couple of lefts shook Johnson in the eighth before a right to the body floored him. On all fours, Johnson, 44-4 (28) with 1 no-contest, could not haul himself erect before the 10-count was completed at the 2:42 mark. Hernandez, 20-0-1 (13), was ecstatic.

"I'm only 21, I have a long future ahead of me, and I'm dedicated to making a name for myself in this sport," he declared. If this performance is anything to go by, he will.

Promoters: Square Ring, Goossen-Tutor Promotions, Prize Fight Promotions, Grand Casinos Tunica

(9-25-04)

Brian Doogan

Lorenzo Parra W 12 Yosam Choi

Seoul, Korea: Undefeated Venezuelan Parra made his second successful defense of the WBA flyweight belt by winning a unanimous decision over faded former WBC 108-pound titlist Choi at the Changchung Gymnasium. Choi, a 32-year-old Korean veteran, didn't have much claim to a title shot after losing his previous two bouts (including one to a sub-.500 fighter), but he nevertheless went the distance, with Parra prevailing by scores of 117-111, 116-112, and 116-113.

PHOTO BY KIM JAE-HWAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Parra sticks Choi with a left

Parra, 26, who had dethroned previously unbeaten Eric Morel in Puerto Rico last December, got off to a good start, but Choi, 26-5 (15), retaliated effectively in the middle rounds. In the later rounds, however, Parra, 24-0 (17), again took the initiative and made clear his superiority.

(9-9-04)

Joe Koizumi

Juan Manuel Marquez W 12 Orlando Salido

Las Vegas, Nevada: In Marquez' first start since his scintillating draw with world featherweight champion Manny Pacquiao in May 2004, he successfully defended the WBA and IBF 126-pound straps with a unanimous 12-round decision over Salido on the Hopkins-De La Hoya card. In terms of excitement, the bout was the direct opposite of the Pacquiao slugfest, and the fans voiced their displeasure at the lack of action throughout the bout.

It was a tactical battle between two counterpunchers, with both knowing that it was to their advantage if the other assumed the role of aggressor. This led to an extended waiting game, featuring far more feints than flurries.

The first five rounds were a study in monotony, as each tried to lure the other into leading, but in the sixth, the 24-year-old Salido, Ciudad Obregon, Mexico, took the initiative and went after Marquez. Both landed rights to the head, but Marquez, having won the battle of wills, generally got the better of it.

There was lots of jumping in and out but little punching in the seventh, as Salido, 126, decided he wasn't going to play into the titleholder's hands two rounds in a row. In the eighth, Marquez, also 126, Mexico City, scored with a combination to the head and a right to the body.

The humdrum nature of the contest continued in the ninth, 10th, and 11th, broken occasionally by brief periods of punching. Marquez, 43-2-1 (33), and Salido, 23-9-1 (15), tried to pacify the paying customers by swapping shots the last 30 seconds of the final round. But

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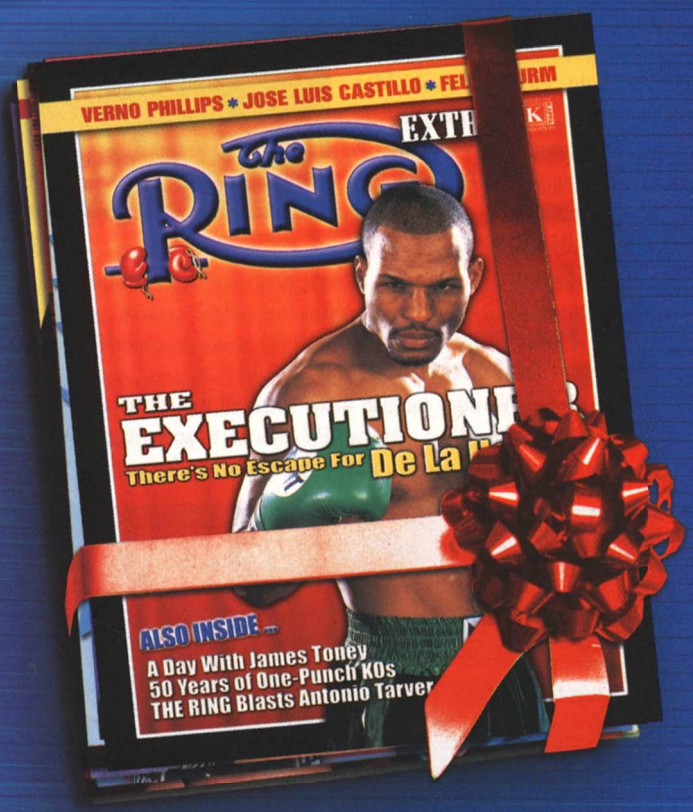

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by then the crowd was thoroughly disgusted and booed anyway.

Judges Glen Hamada (USA) and Raul Caiz (USA) both scored it 117-111 for Marquez, while Duane Ford (USA) had it 118-110, also for Marquez. The referee was Tony Weeks (USA).

Whether Marquez' lackluster showing had anything to do with his demanding duel with Pacquiao or was just the result of an unfortunate clash of styles is a question that won't be answered until sometime in the future. But when it comes to selling tickets to his next fight, the 31-year-old Marquez didn't do himself any favors.

Television: HBO PPV

Promoters: Top Rank, Golden Boy Promotions

(9-18-04)

Nigel Collins

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Marquez rips Salido to the body during tedious affair

Kofi Jantuah KO 1 Marco Antonio Rubio

Las Vegas, Nevada: Jantuah made splendid use of his showcase spot on the Hopkins-De La Hoya PPV telecast to score a one-punch knockout in the first round of scheduled 12-rounder at the MGM Grand Garden Arena. The spectacular kayo was exactly what Jantuah needed to jumpstart his career.

Jantuah and Rubio, both 154, were exchanging blows in the opening moments when Jantuah unleashed a wicked left hook. The blow caught Rubio flush, twisted his head sideways, and sent him crashing down on his back, where referee Jay Nady (USA)

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Rubio barely lasted half a minute against Jantuah

counted out the 25-year-old from Torreon, Mexico, 33 seconds into the bout.

The 30-year-old Jantuah, 28-1 (18), is originally from Ghana, but has been based in the U.S. since 1998 and currently resides in Las Vegas. Despite his obvious ability, Jantuah's career had bogged down due to inactivity and hepatitis B. But according to Marc Ratner of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, "Kofi was tested last year and it came back clean." This is good news for Jantuah, who certainly has the wherewithal to compete with anybody in the junior middleweight division.

"He hit me with a perfect shot," said Rubio, 25-2-1 (23), words that foreshadowed those of De La Hoya later that same evening.

Television: HBO PPV

Promoters: Top Rank, Golden Boy Promotions

(9-18-04)

Nigel Collins

Veerapol Sahaprom W 12 Cecilio Santos

Chainart Province, Thailand: Taking another step toward Orlando Canizales' division record of 16 consecutive title defenses, Veerapol easily turned away unknown Mexican Santos at Chaophraya Dam's Ground. The 35-year-old Veerapol appeared as sturdy as ever as he won a unanimous decision and racked up his 14th defense of the WBC bantamweight title.

Veerapol used his vastly superior experience to dictate the terms against the 26-year-old challenger. The judges scored 119-109, 118-110, and 117-111, all for Veerapol, 45-1-2 (31). With the loss, Santos fell to 15-4-2 (9).

(9-11-04)

Carl Thompson KO 5 David Haye

London, England: It was supposed to be a coming-of-age fight, but it turned into an improbable coming of the aged. Haye, 197¾, London, England, a world amateur silver medalist in Belfast in 2001, was taken beyond four rounds for the first time in his career, then stopped emphatically in the fifth by the veteran Thompson, 198, Bolton, England, at Wembley Arena. Haye was not the only one stunned at his demise.

At 40 years old, Thompson ought to have been retired. A decorated old warhorse, he had proved himself time and again in the big moments of battle, as in those two crushing encounters with Chris Eubank, the four-round shootout against Ezra Sellers, and the classic one-punch, come-from-behind knockout of Sebastian Rothmann. For Haye, Thompson was seemingly a good opponent, a respected name, but a fighter too old to do him damage. Except, Thompson survived his crisis in the opening round, the 23-year-old Haye got tired as early as the second, and the cunning and remaining skill of the veteran finally proved too much, overpowering Haye at a stage where he might have imagined he would already be on his way home.

"You've got to risk losing in order to give value for money and to learn," said Haye, 10-1 (10). It proved a very painful lesson.

But first Thompson, 33-6 (25), had to suffer. From the opening bell, Haye attacked and threatened to overwhelm his foe with the speed of his attack and the volume and sharpness of his punching. Thompson did nothing more than cover up, which he did well, but his legs betrayed him repeatedly as Haye landed heavy shots with both hands. He was intent on a first-round stoppage. But Thompson hung in there. He reeled around the ring several times, but referee Terry O'Connor (England), although he watched closely, was never ready to intervene. The bell came to Thompson's rescue, but he was punished more in the second, a big right hand staggering him again and leaving him vulnerable to Haye's hard hooks—of which there were plenty.

But Thompson had been in bad situations on plenty of other nights. He knew how to get through. Nicknamed "The Cat," it was almost like he waited for another life as he covered up along the ropes, rolling with Thompson's punches, teetering on the edge, but hanging on. Haye slowed his attack. He said later it was a ploy. But his stamina began seriously being questioned in the third as his punching slowed further and carried less force. He was wilting, and it gave Thompson hope. With the jab, he was catching Haye, whose hands were ruinously low.

Thompson had success with his right hand in the fourth, tagging Haye several times. The young man's legs suddenly looked weaker than Thompson's. The fifth round was new territory, and it showed. Thompson was catching him with the jab and then suddenly a right hand exploded of the side of Haye's head and down he went. He took the referee's count on one knee, but his tiredness was as clear as the shock on his face. The tide had turned irreversibly. Haye did fire back, but was caught again by another thunderous right and reeled back into a neutral corner. His trainer, Adam Booth, decided to throw in the towel just as referee O'Connor stepped in to stop it at 2:53 of the fifth.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Ageless Thompson derails young hopeful Haye

"People write me off, but I'm still in there and I'm still capable of

showing some of these young guys a thing or two," said Thompson. What he showed Haye was that in order to make it, whatever skills you might have, you need first to be able to last the course.

(9-10-04)

Brian Doogan

Katsushige Kawashima W 12 Raul Juarez

Yokohama, Japan: WBC 115-pound titlist Kawashima, 115, Japan, kept his newly acquired belt as he dropped Mexican challenger "Baby" Juarez, 114¼, in the second, sixth, and seventh, withstood Juarez' late surge, and earned a unanimous decision over 12 heats.

Two of the judges scored the fight surprisingly close. Tony Castellano (USA) had it 114-110, and Julie Lederman (USA) saw it 113-111. Brad Vocale (Australia) seemed closer to the mark with his score of 117-107 for the muscular beltholder. THE RING scored it 116-108 for Kawashima.

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kawashima drills Juarez with a short right

Why were the scores of the two officials so close even though Juarez suffered three 10-8 rounds and had a point deducted for spitting out his mouth guard when sent to the deck? Because Juarez recovered well after his knockdowns and threw light but fast combinations that impressed the judges. But Kawashima, 29, was clearly the much harder puncher, as shown in the second when he floored the Mexican with a heavy overhand right, Juarez barely regaining his feet to resume fighting. Kawashima again decked him with Bernard Hopkins-like left hooks to the side of the belly in both the sixth and seventh, and accordingly looked eager to finish the affair. The Japanese man ignored Juarez' powder-puff shots and tried to ice him with big shots, allowing Juarez, 30, to steal rounds with his desperate, if not effective, blows.

When Juarez was knocked down in the closing seconds of the sixth, referee Bill Clancy (USA) had to stop the proceedings after counting the mandatory eight to have Juarez' dislodged mouthpiece washed and replaced. The spectators jeered the third man's generosity toward Juarez, 32-10 (15) with 1 no-contest, which slowed Kawashima's momentum. The same thing happened when the challenger was dropped in the seventh, but Clancy deducted a point this time after seeing Juarez deliberately drop the gum shield from his mouth.

Surprisingly, Juarez' best moment came in the eighth, when Kawashima was looking to finish the fight and the Mexican landed an effective countering shot that staggered the titleholder. The final four rounds seemed split at two apiece, leaving Kawashima a clear winner in the eyes of the partisan crowd. Julie Lederman's score of 113-111—meaning it would have been 113-112 without the point deduction—left the fans particularly stunned.

Kawashima wasn't overly impressive on the whole in spite of scoring three knockdowns, as his punches in the later rounds were far too wide. But he did show good power, proving that his title-winning first-round kayo over Masamori Tokuyama was no fluke.

Kawashima, 27-3 (18), said, "I feel sorry to my supporters not to be able to score a victory by a knockout, despite flooring him three times. I became too tense and stiff to score an anticipated kayo win."

Promoter: Ohashi Promotions

(9-20-04)

Joe Koizumi

Muhammad Rachman W 12 Daniel Reyes

Jakarta, Indonesia: Reyes' climb to the top of the 105-pound division hit a major snag when he went to his opponent's backyard for his second defense of the IBF mini flyweight title and came away on the wrong end of a disputed split decision. Mexican Reyes, 105, brought a 10-fight undefeated streak into the bout, but Indonesian veteran Rachman, 105, was unbeaten in 27 straight coming in, and escaped with his streak intact as he claimed the alphabet belt.

Reyes, 32, had the better moves and frequently outboxed Rachman, but the 31-year-old challenger was the aggressor and appeared to land more clean punches. The scoring came down primarily to which style the judges preferred. Montol Suriyachand (Thailand) preferred Rachman and scored 115-113, and Muhammad Rois (Indonesia) also favored his countryman, by a wider score of 116-112. Judge Manuel Soler (Colombia) preferred the slick maneuvering of Reyes, handing in a 116-113 card in favor of the Mexican.

"I believe that I won by five points," said Reyes, 34-2-1 (29), afterward. His handlers filed a complaint with the IBF shortly after the fight. It's not realistic to expect the result to be overturned, but it's possible that Reyes will be granted an immediate rematch with Rachman, 49-7-3 (21).

(9-14-04) ■

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New Face

(Continued from page 24)

was something he knew his parents didn't want him involved in. So Kid Diamond used a little ingenuity and some allies—namely his older siblings, three sisters and two brothers. His sisters covered for him every time he went to train. He'd carry a large bag with his equipment, telling his parents he was just lugging some athletic gear for one of his brothers. Or he would tell them he was going to soccer practice. He always had an excuse ready. The trophies he accumulated were tucked away in shoeboxes.

For one year, Raiymkulov managed to outsmart the two smartest people he knew—until one afternoon, his mother, Gulany, found his boxing trophies while cleaning his room.

Kid Diamond went into scramble mode. His brothers tried vouching for him, saying the trophies were theirs. Mom didn't buy it.

"My mother was sad," Raiymkulov recalled. "The whole family knew, except my mother and father. Finally, they found out and I was already doing good with boxing. I started giving problems to the experienced guys, and I started telling myself that I want to stay in boxing. I had to make a deal with my family."

The whole family sat and discussed Raiymkulov's future. But only his father, Myza, made the decisions.

"I told my father that I liked boxing," Kid Diamond said. "I told him not to take away what I loved to do. We made a deal. I could box, as long as I finished school.

"My parents thought if I took some punches, my brains would fall out. They started using examples of different boxers and what they were going through. I told my parents that I would be very careful. In amateur boxing, I was never cut, never knocked down. All my losses came by one or two points, and they came against all of the best fighters in the world."

His parents gave in, though his mother still had some trepidations. Raiymkulov chuckled at one particular memory. During an amateur fight when Raiymkulov was 17, going up against a more experienced fighter of 27, Kid Diamond's mother started crying during the bout, warning his corner that she would take her son home if he got hit again.

"My mother used to say, 'I don't want to see you walking around with black eyes and a big nose,'" Raiymkulov said, laughing. "She used to say, 'People see you like that, and they'll think we're alcoholics who beat their children.'"

But while his siblings are lawyers and teachers, Raiymkulov continues to grunt and sweat in sport's red light district. He came to the attention of Garnick Khachikian at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Khachikian, who now manages Raiymkulov, liked the way Kid Diamond carried himself. Khachikian brought Raiymkulov to the United States in 2001, and soon after introduced him to trainer Don House. Khachikian then took the added step of getting Kid Diamond hooked up with powerful promoter Top Rank.

"I think what Top Rank wants to do is get the kid a few more fights, then throw him in against a champion and see what happens sometime in mid-2005," House said of Raiymkulov. "I don't think he should have a problem. The reason I say that is because of the talent this kid has. He adapts so well in the ring and to each opponent. He sparred with Cory Spinks, and Almazbek dropped him. He gave Floyd Mayweather trouble. Floyd won't spar with the kid anymore.

"It's hard for me to get sparring for this kid. Most fighters slip punches and move away from punches; Almazbek stays in the pocket. He'll take a shot to give a shot."

It's something House is not that crazy about. "I'd like him to move more," House said. "People in this business say you're going to get hit. That's what they say. I believe you train not to get hit. Offensively, the kid is real solid."

Bruce Trampler, Top Rank's matchmaker, likes the 27-year-old Raiymkulov's work ethic and entertaining style. "He has ability, and with his exciting style, that's a good combination," Trampler said. "It's hard to tell what he really needs to work on, because he's been getting guys out so fast (Raiymkulov's last three fights have all ended inside two rounds). But fundamentally, he's pretty sound. He has the tools to go all of the way. We'd like to see him fighting for a title soon, but it all depends on who's there. We feel he can be competitive with any lightweight champion out there right now."

While Raiymkulov, 18-0 (10), is getting acclimated to the American style of boxing, he is also getting used to American culture. Unfortunately, one of his first introductions to the United States came through television, watching *The Jerry Springer Show*, featuring fathers who had sexual relations with their daughters.

"My friend was translating for me, and I thought it was sick," Raiymkulov said. "It got me so mad, I felt like throwing my shoe and breaking the TV."

His family has yet to see Raiymkulov fight live as a pro. But Kid Diamond sends tapes back to Kyrgyzstan for them to watch. There is a 12-hour difference between where he lives in Las Vegas and Kyrgyzstan. Raiymkulov still calls home twice a week. His ultimate goal is to one day fight in Kyrgyzstan with a world title belt strapped around his waist, in front of his family and friends.

When that time comes, Raiymkulov hopes his mother will shed tears of joy for him—maybe even watch him for a whole fight, closing her eyes only a few times.

"I always ask her when it's finished, who won the fight?" Raiymkulov said. "It's me."

But win or lose, there will be one parental requirement Raiymkulov has to adhere to: "They have to check me when I come home, no other doctors." ■

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CLASSIC

From THE RING, August 1992

After Barely Surviving Alex Stewart ...

FACE IT, GEORGE: IT'S OVER

By Jeff Ryan

After 30 minutes of the kind of hell that middle-aged jocks are supposed to recall, not experience, after the bridge he'd so carefully constructed over a generation gap had collapsed, after the only references to hamburger was coming from ringsiders staring at his ravaged face, George Foreman leaned on his funny bone, the one part of him not swollen or sore. Somewhere in the crowded ring, he knew, was ring announcer Michael Buffer and his microphone. Foreman looked for Buffer, then for the Bufferin.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is George Foreman," he told a crowd of 11,140 fans in Las Vegas' Thomas & Mack Center. "Can anybody tell me where the aspirin is?"

Ba-da-boom.

You talk rimshots at the Thomas & Mack, and you're usually talking about the home team, the Runnin' Rebels basketball squad from the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. In March, its coach, Jerry Tarkanian, stepped down after 19 years. "Tark The Shark," who flouted the rules of the NCAA, was told by the administration to say goodbye and stop bringing ridicule to the school. After his showing in April, "George The Whale," who has flouted the rules of Mother Nature and Father Time long enough, should be told to step down and stop bringing ridicule to his sport.

Whether or not George Foreman's career goes on, his stand-up comedy act has come to a close. By the 10th and final round against Alex Stewart, the only comedy was watching Foreman try to stand up. His eyes were two slits, his nose was broken, and his upper lip was so swollen that it looked like he was wearing his *and* Stewart's mouthpieces. With that image on the screen in the 18 million living rooms

Clinging to a slight lead in the 10th round, Foreman, his eyes two slits, could barely get off a punch against Stewart. Foreman was grasping at anything to stay in the fight, from butting and elbowing to throwing seemingly intentional low blows.

serviced by HBO, it's going to be hard to get that cheeseburger routine to play in Middle America ever again.

Foreman's punches took longer to launch than the space shuttle, and the roly-poly holy man, the picture of sportsmanship in recent years when asking referees to rescue his opponents from harm, had become the antithesis of the good Christian soldier. He no doubt did his own praying in the late rounds, but his butting, elbowing, and purposeful low blows sure seemed intended to bring Stewart to his knees.

After Foreman had earned a majority decision, he conceded that he should have finished Stewart after he had him down twice in round two, and was one good punch away from a win via the three-knockdown rule.

"I took it easy on the kid," he said. "I didn't want to hurt him."

He tried to say it with a straight face, but that wasn't possible. Stewart had beaten it crooked.

"He wanted to take it easy on the kid," a smirking Sugar Ray Leonard sniffed a week after the fight. "Bull----, George."

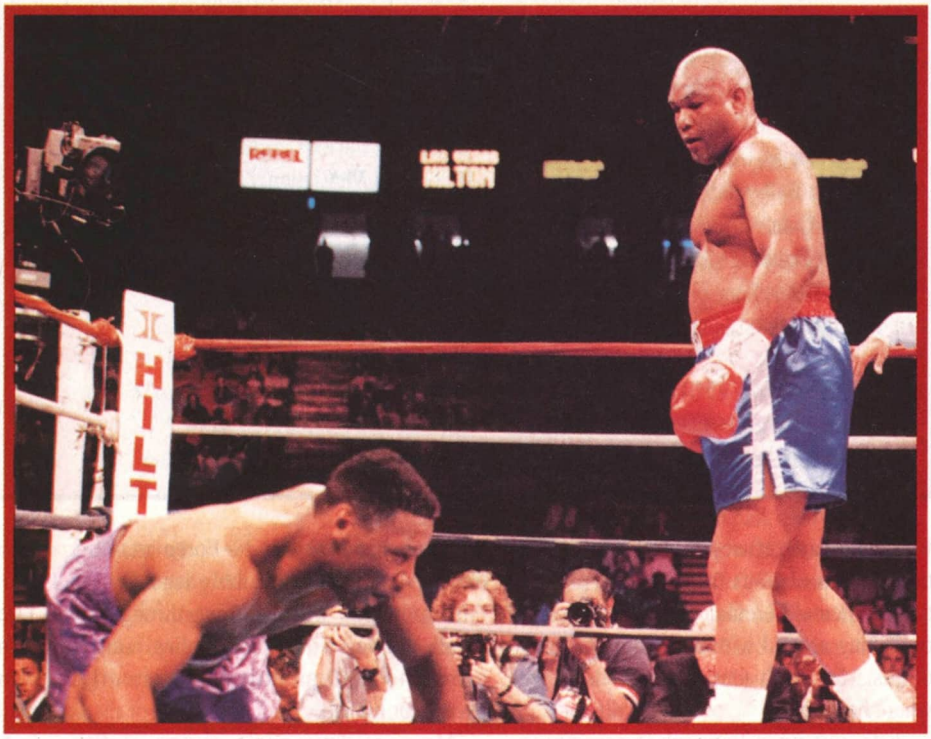
Those knockdowns were undoubtedly the most important ones Foreman had scored since he toppled Joe Frazier six times to win the crown in 1973. Though he lost a point for low blows in round 10, Foreman got a 94-93 nod on the cards of Art Lurie and Dalby Shirley, while Patricia Jarman scored 94-94. (THE RING saw Foreman the winner by a 94-93 count.) The bout would have been a draw had Shirley not given Foreman a 10-7 edge in the second, a round that Lurie and Jarman both scored 10-8.

The morning after, the excuses flowed the way Big George only wished his punches could have, with the Foreman camp actually believing that Stewart's gloves had been injected with water in order to make the gauze-and-tape hand-wraps like plaster. Despite the victory, Foreman and Co. felt a pressing need to try and save face, something the preacher's mouthpiece and Angelo Dundee's Enswell hadn't done.

Foreman won the fight, but lost the momentum he had hoped to build for another multimillion-dollar title fight. After all, he'd developed an incredible reputation for handpicking opponents. The mere fact that Foreman is fighting a guy indicates that the poor sap should be dismissed in three rounds—maximum. Stewart, who had been halted by Evander Holyfield, Mike Tyson, and Michael Moorer, and had a reputation for being terrified in big fights, didn't even have his own manager believing in him.

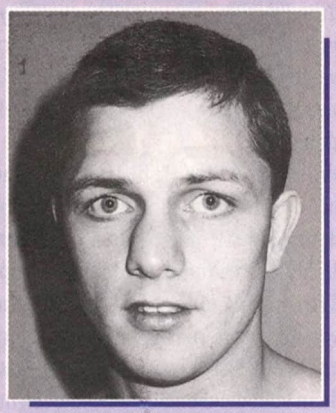
"He just can't take a punch anymore," Jim Fennell said just before the fight. "He'll just be a punching bag with human hair on top. Every punch now hurts him."

There were two significant moments in the bout, the first resulting in Stewart exposing Foreman as a punching bag with *no hair*, and the second resulting in Foreman exposing Stewart—and saving the fight. Moment One came in round two,



Foreman conceded afterward that he should have finished Stewart off in the second round, when "Big George" had Stewart down twice. "I took it easy on the kid," quipped Foreman, still trying to joke through his misshapen face at the postfight press conference.

THE RING RATINGS, August 1992



Paul Hodkinson

HEAVYWEIGHTS
1. **Evander Holyfield,** Atlanta, GA
2. **Riddick Bowe,** Brooklyn, NY
3. **Razor Ruddock,** Canada
4. **Larry Holmes,** Easton, PA
5. **Tim Witherspoon,** Philadelphia, PA
6. **Tony Tucker,** Beverly Hills, CA
7. **George Foreman,** Marshall, TX
8. **Lennox Lewis,** England
9. **Michael Moorer,** Detroit, MI
10. **Ray Mercer,** Newark, NJ

CRUISERWEIGHTS
1. **Bobby Czyz,** Montgomery, NJ
2. **James Warring,** Miami, FL
3. **Anaclet Wamba,** France
4. **Jeff Lampkin,** Youngstown, OH
5. **Orlin Norris,** Campo, CA
6. **Taoufik Belbouli,** France
7. **Alfred Cole,** Newark, NJ
8. **Robert Daniels,** Miami, FL
9. **Akim Tafer,** France
10. **Dwight Qawi,** Lindenwold, NJ

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
1. **Prince Charles Williams,** Mansfield, OH
2. **Thomas Hearns,** Detroit, MI
3. **Virgil Hill,** Australia
4. **Frank Tate,** Houston, TX
5. **Jeff Harding,** Australia
6. **Graciano Rocchigiani,** Germany
7. **Leeonzer Barber,** Detroit, MI
8. **Christophe Tiozzo,** France
9. **Henry Maske,** Germany
10. **Guy Waters,** Australia

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Iran Barkley,** Bronx, NY
2. **Victor Cordoba,** Northern Ireland
3. **Michael Nunn,** Davenport, IA
4. **Chris Eubank,** England
5. **Mauro Galvano,** Italy
6. **Nigel Benn,** England
7. **Tim Littles,** Flint, MI
8. **Darrin Van Horn,** Lexington, KY
9. **Tony Thornton,** Glassboro, NJ
10. **Merqui Sosa,** New York, NY

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Julian Jackson,** Virgin Islands
2. **James Toney,** Ann Arbor, MI
3. **Mike McCallum,** Brooklyn, NY
4. **Sumbu Kalambay,** Italy
5. **Roy Jones,** Pensacola, FL
6. **Steve Collins,** Brockton, MA
7. **Reggie Johnson,** Houston, TX
8. **Bernard Hopkins,** Philadelphia, PA
9. **Lamar Parks,** Greeneville, SC
10. **Gerald McClellan,** Detroit, MI

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
1. **Terry Norris,** Mission Valley, CA
2. **Gianfranco Rosi,** Italy
3. **Vinny Pazienza,** Cranston, RI
4. **John David Jackson,** Tuscon, AZ
5. **Vernon Phillips,** New York, NY
6. **Julio Cesar Vasquez,** Argentina
7. **Gilbert Dele,** France
8. **Jorge Castro,** Argentina
9. **Aaron Davis,** Bronx, NY
10. **Carl Daniels,** St. Louis, MO

WELTERWEIGHTS
1. **Meldrick Taylor,** Philadelphia, PA
2. **Buddy McGirt,** Hauppauge, NY
3. **Simon Brown,** Germantown, MD
4. **Maurice Blocker,** Germantown, MD
5. **Genaro Leon,** Mexico
6. **Glenwood Brown,** Plainfield, NJ
7. **Crisanto Espana,** Northern Ireland
8. **Santos Cardona,** Puerto Rico
9. **David Gonzalez,** San Jose, CA
10. **Yory Boy Campas,** Mexico

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez,** Mexico
2. **Pernell Whitaker,** Norfolk, VA
3. **Rafael Pineda,** Colombia
4. **Akinobu Hiranaka,** Japan
5. **Terrence Alli,** Linden, NJ
6. **Charles Murray,** Newark, NJ
7. **Hector Camacho,** Big Cypress, FL
8. **Pat Barrett,** England
9. **Greg Haugen,** Henderson, NV
10. **Rodney Moore,** Philadelphia, PA

LIGHTWEIGHTS
1. **Freddie Pendleton,** Miami, FL
2. **Jorge Paez,** Mexico
3. **Tracy Spann,** Plainfield, NJ
4. **Darryll Tyson,** Washington, DC
5. **Sharmba Mitchell,** Takoma Park, MD
6. **Chil Sung Chun,** South Korea
7. **Poli Diaz,** Spain
8. **Joey Gamache,** Lewiston, ME
9. **Miguel Angel Gonzalez,** Mexico
10. **Frankie Mitchell,** Philadelphia, PA

when Stewart refused to fall for a third time. It was obvious that the fight plan of the 259-pound Foreman was the equivalent of driving around with an eighth of a tank of gas. Hey, isn't that all he needs to get where he's going?

Yes, but what happens if something unexpected comes up, like a roadblock or a detour? After Stewart, 28-4 (28), rose from the deck—and the dead—Foreman, 71-3 (66), was the one on wobbly legs. By the third round, he was breathing through his mouth, flailing wildly, and finding himself unable to land anything consistently, except for his jab.

Moment Two came in the eighth round, when Foreman, who appeared ready to crash if backed up or pasted with a solid combination, rallied to rock Stewart with right crosses and uppercuts. The moxie that many doubted the Jamaican had, which had surfaced in rounds two through seven, seemed to instantly drain away. Stewart spent the last two rounds listening to his corner's instructions to jab, and in the 10th, he hardly looked like a man trying to take

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

1. **Azumah Nelson,** Ghana
2. **Genaro Hernandez,** Los Angeles, CA
3. **John-John Molina,** Puerto Rico
4. **Tony Lopez,** Sacramento, CA
5. **Jeff Fenech,** Australia
6. **Eugene Speed,** Palmer Park, MD
7. **Gabe Ruelas,** Arleta, CA
8. **Calvin Grove,** Philadelphia, PA
9. **Regilio Tuur,** Whitestone, NY
10. **Yuji Watanabe,** Japan

FEATHERWEIGHTS

1. **Paul Hodkinson,** England
2. **Manuel Medina,** Mexico
3. **Yung Kyun Park,** South Korea
4. **Kevin Kelley,** Flushing, NY
5. **Maurizio Stecca,** Italy
6. **Jesse James Leija,** San Antonio, TX
7. **Marcos Villasana,** Mexico
8. **Tom Johnson,** Detroit, MI
9. **Troy Dorsey,** Mansfield, TX
10. **Louie Espinoza,** Phoenix, AZ

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

1. **Jesse Benavides,** Corpus Christi, TX
2. **Welcome Ncita,** South Africa
3. **Thierry Jacob,** France
4. **Wilfredo Vasquez,** Puerto Rico
5. **Kennedy McKinney,** Las Vegas, NV
6. **Jesus Salud,** San Diego, CA
7. **Pedro Decima,** Argentina
8. **Daniel Zaragoza,** Mexico
9. **Tracy Patterson,** Highland, NY
10. **Luis Mendoza,** Colombia

BANTAMWEIGHTS

1. **Orlando Canizales,** Laredo, TX
2. **Eddie Cook,** Las Vegas, NV
3. **Joichiro Tatsuyoshi,** Japan
4. **Junior Jones,** Brooklyn, NY
5. **Victor Rabanales,** Mexico
6. **Duke McKenzie,** England
7. **Israel Contreras,** Venezuela
8. **Eliecer Julio,** Colombia
9. **Cecilio Espino,** Los Angeles, CA
10. **Javier Leon,** Mexico

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

1. **Sung Kil Moon,** South Korea
2. **Robert Quiroga,** San Antonio, TX
3. **Katsuya Onizuka,** Japan
4. **Thalernsak Sithbaobay,** Thailand
5. **Armando Castro,** Mexico
6. **Greg Richardson,** Youngstown, OH
7. **Vincenzo Belcastro,** Italy
8. **Jose Quirino,** Mexico
9. **Gerry Penalosa,** Philippines
10. **Jose Ruiz,** Puerto Rico

FLYWEIGHTS

1. **Muangchai Kittikasem,** Thailand
2. **Dave McAuley,** Ireland
3. **Yong Kang Kim,** South Korea
4. **Rodolfo Blanco,** Colombia
5. **Scotty Olson,** Las Vegas, NV
6. **Yuri Arbachakov,** Soviet Union
7. **Yun Un Chin,** South Korea
8. **Ysaias Zamudio,** Blythe, CA
9. **Pat Clinton,** Scotland
10. **Alberto Jimenez,** Mexico

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

1. **Hiroki Ioka,** Japan
2. **Myung Woo Yuh,** South Korea
3. **Michael Carbajal,** Phoenix, AZ
4. **Humberto Gonzalez,** Mexico
5. **Melchor Cob-Castro,** Mexico
6. **Leon Salazar,** Panama
7. **Jose DeJesus,** Puerto Rico
8. **Domingo Sosa,** Dominican Republic
9. **Kwang Sun Kim,** South Korea
10. **Robinson Cuestas,** Panama

the fight away from the sentimental favorite.

"My plan was to box him, and I stuck to the game plan," Stewart explained. "I should have let it all hang out. I still had something left in the end."

In the end, Foreman had nothing left in terms of skills, but a few things left in terms of options. So it is when you're a superstar, even one who is reduced to hatching conspiracy theories to explain away a struggle with a 6-1 underdog. In the near future, the former heavyweight king must decide which of these three courses to pursue:

•**Retirement:** Following Foreman's near-slam dunking on the UNLV campus, a quiet walk into the sunset was both promised and dismissed. That should be an indication of how difficult any decision about the future will be.

"I'm not interested in doing more two-fight deals, or fighting any more of these young tigers," Foreman told *Newsday*. "I want another title shot, but I'm sticking to my timetable to be out by the end of 1992."

While Foreman was at least acknowledging how pretty the beckoning sunset can be, his promoters, Bob Arum and Ron Weathers, were talking about a fight against a powerhitter like Riddick Bowe or Tommy Morrison.

"George ain't gonna be doing this much longer," Weathers said, "but the fights he's gonna have are gonna count."

Foreman's ego may be the healthiest part of him these days, but if he retires, he doesn't have to fear fading away like the print on his newspaper clippings from the '68 Olympics. He has been offered a role in a sitcom, he can do more TV commentary (then again, let's hope not), and he's in demand for commercials and public speaking. And he'll retire after having made about $25-million during his comeback. If a nest egg of that size ever rolled down the side of a mountain, everything within 100 miles of the foot of it would be declared a disaster area.

•**Waiting for one last title shot:** The Rev got revved up against Holyfield in April 1991, and turned in a spectacular showing. But he absorbed consistent punishment. How damaging that fight had been to the body of a fortysomething fighter wasn't evident until the Stewart fight 11 months later. The post-Holyfield Foreman moved his arms in slow-motion and seemed unable to get out of the way of even the most telegraphed punches.

After this outing, nobody would buy Foreman-Holyfield II, though it probably wouldn't matter, anyway. Insulted that Foreman sued him for breaking the contract for a rematch last fall, Holyfield has said that he won't grant the preacher another shot. That has left Foreman hinting that he'll retire if Holyfield beats Holmes on June 19, but he'll face Holmes if the other heavyweight fossil pulls an upset and wins the title.

For Foreman, hopes of one last invite to the prom may be wishful thinking. If Holmes proves himself to be good enough

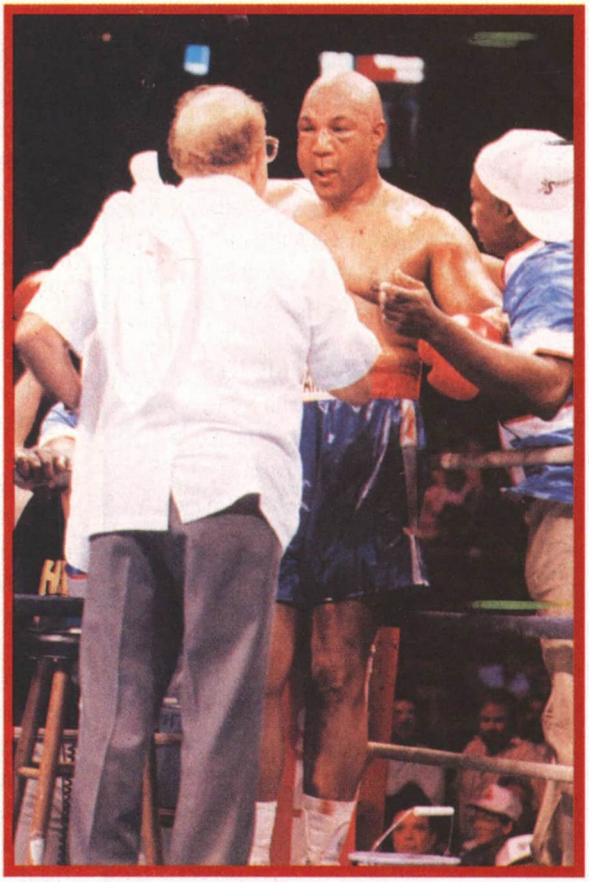
to defeat Ray Mercer and Holyfield, it will be extremely difficult to market the worn-out Foreman as a legitimate threat. What appeal does a matchup of relics have if one of the relics is perceived to be a batting-practice fastball?

"There is very little appeal for Holmes-Foreman after the way Foreman looked in the Stewart fight," says promoter Lou Falcigno, one of boxing's foremost authorities on pay-per-view television. "Financially, I just don't see Holmes-Foreman being a big fight."

•Fighting a contender: If Foreman really wanted to retire, he would have done so after looking in the mirror on the morning after in Las Vegas. As each day passes, the soreness diminishes, and the bruises fade a little more. He will probably convince himself that his opponent had merely been underestimated, and that Stewart is just as tough as Riddick Bowe, Michael Moorer, and Lennox Lewis. The press, Foreman will insist, should have been smart enough to recognize that.

Even if Holyfield derails Holmes, as expected, the hunch here is that Foreman *will* fight again. What he won't do is return to the USA Network for $50,000 paydays against Bigfoot Martin. As often as he's been mentioning retirement, he's also been chatting up a showdown with Bowe. Foreman's wife, Joan, wants her husband to quit, but she wanted that after the fight with Holyfield. Despite Big George's jokes about how she'll kick his butt, her wishes will be a non-factor.

A Foreman title shot may be hard to sell, but a crossroads shootout with one of the young guns wouldn't be. Only one man has kayoed Foreman, and that was Muhammad Ali. The incentive for the young guns is tremendous, and the storyline is intriguing. That's why an HBO or a Showtime would be all-too-willing to make it happen.



Angelo Dundee tries to talk Foreman through a rough stretch late in the fight. Foreman was breathing heavily in the early going, and it only got worse after his nose was broken.

"As a friend, I would like to see George retire, yet it's George's place to decide whether or not he wants to retire," says Ross Greenburg, vice president and executive producer of HBO Sports.

When asked if his network would air Foreman-Bowe or Foreman-Moorer, Greenburg added, "I don't know if George would want to take that kind of a risk for less money, but sure, they are attractive fights. We would be interested."

Before the war with Stewart, Roy Foreman, George's brother, leaked to the press the identity of another possible rival for his brother: "We've been trying to get Elvis. He's been dead long enough now."

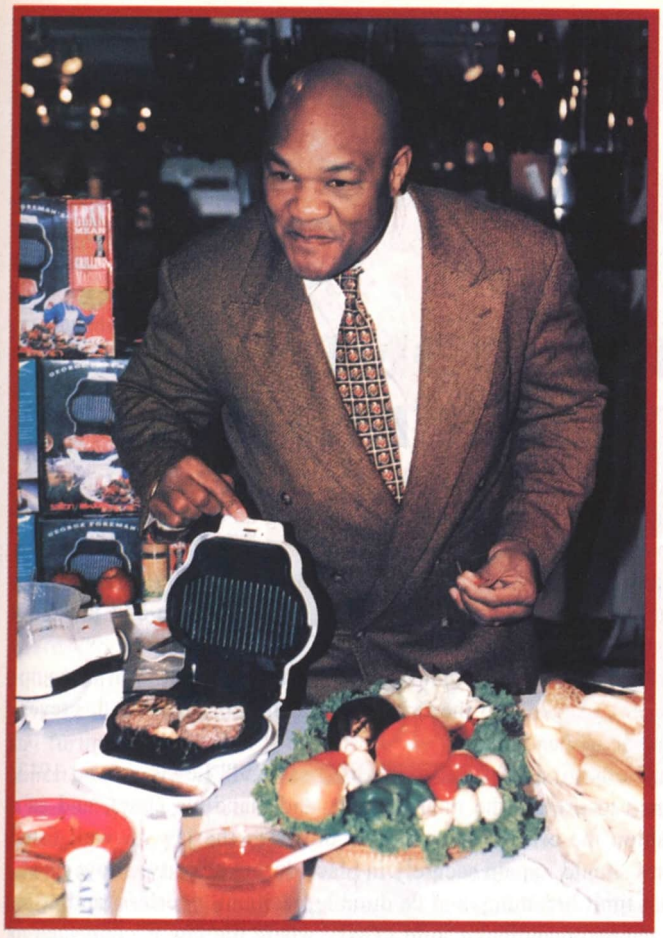
If you're still chuckling, you, like George Foreman, still don't get it. Foreman will be back, but the competition will be a lot more lively than old Elvis. It will, however, be a good idea if the millions who've embraced Big George as their surrogate preacher, or grandfather, or uncle, start singing "Don't Be Cruel" to his pool of opponents, and start booking their rooms at the Heartbreak Hotel.

Elvis just got his face on a stamp, but it is Foreman who seems destined to get licked, but good.

***

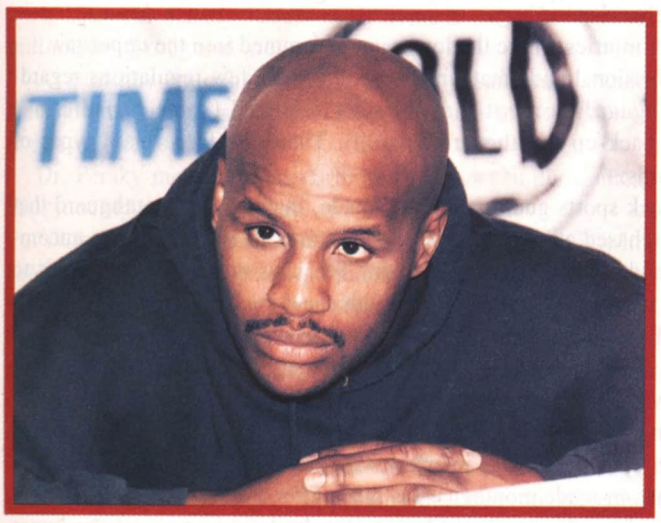
ADDENDUM: To the surprise of no

Stewart's plan against Foreman was easy. Continuing to flick his left jab into Foreman's face, Stewart almost took the fight away from the Foreman, a sentimental favorite of the crowd and TV audience.



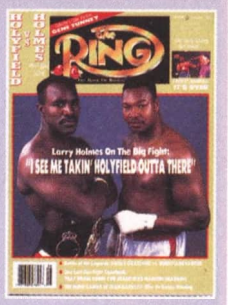
Many observers thought Foreman should retire after the Stewart fight, especially with his infomercial gig to fall back on. Foreman also had a network sitcom on the table, plus his announcing duties with HBO.

one, Foreman did keep fighting—and not just until the end of 1992. He beat Pierre Coetzer (KO 8), lost to Tommy Morrison (L 12), and then made history against Michael Moorer on November 5, 1994, scoring a 10th-round knockout to become the oldest fighter to win the heavyweight title. Foreman finally retired four fights later, in 1997, but has continued to hint at a possible comeback to this day. ■

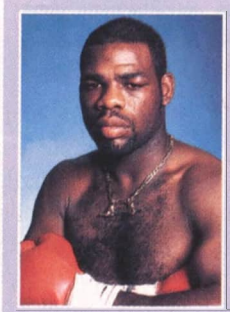


If Foreman insisted on fighting on, a crossroads bout with a younger man like Michael Moorer seemed a possibility. As it turned out, that matchup would eventually become a very memorable reality.

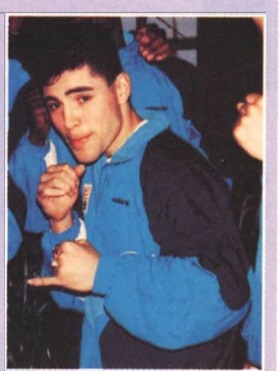
THE RING, August 1992



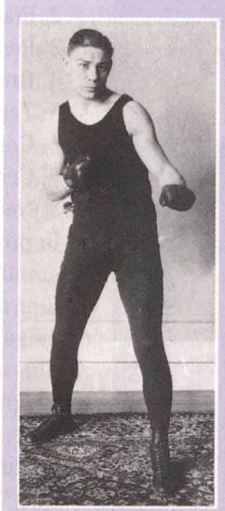
The Cover: Former heavyweight champ Larry Holmes was 42 and still talking big, with a pending fight against reigning champ Evander Holyfield looming. "The Easton Assassin" felt his educated jab and boxing ability would enable him to prevail over Holyfield. "I'm 100 times better at 42 than [Muhammad] Ali was at 36 when he fought me," Holmes said.



Barkley Does It Again: Iran Barkley talked about drawing on the power of a number of personal hardships to propel him to a rematch victory over Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns. "The Blade" said it was a case of mind over matter: "I have this crazy madness in me," he explained after the fight.

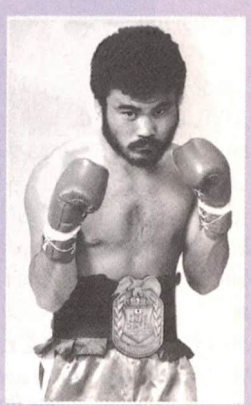


As Good As Gold?: Back when he was just a skinny 19-year-old kid from rugged East Los Angeles, dreaming about Olympic gold, Oscar De La Hoya spoke candidly with THE RING about the sacrifices he was willing to make to achieve boxing stardom. One came right after graduating from Garfield High School, when he missed his senior prom to participate in a boxing tournament.



The Immortal Greb: THE RING recalled the career of the legendary Harry Greb, an all-time great who lived as hard as he fought. Greb, who reigned as middleweight champion from 1923-'26 and is regarded by some as the greatest 160-pounder ever, incredibly fought the last five years of his career blind in his right eye.

Fighter Of The Month: Akinobu Hiranaka, following a script he saw a year earlier, needed just 92 seconds to squash WBA junior welterweight titlist Edwin Rosario. In 1991, Hiranaka made the trek from Tokyo to Sacramento, California, to see Rosario win the belt from Loreto Garza by hurting him badly in the first round, so Hiranaka did the same to Rosario.



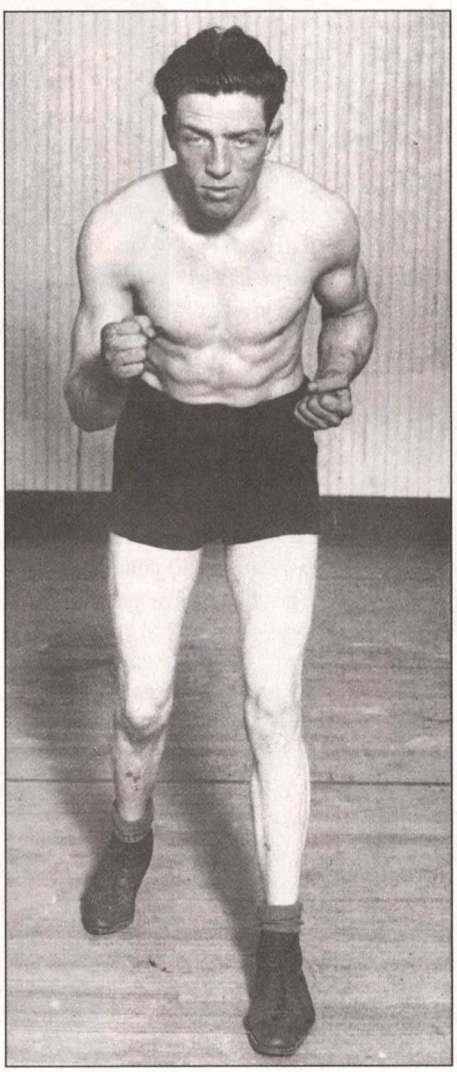
THE FIGHT DOCTOR

PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS

By Margaret Goodman, MD

With the exception of the gloves, few would consider boxing an equipment sport. The attire is simple, especially compared to other contact sports such as football or hockey. Even so, in my 10 years as a ring physician, I am continually amazed that a mouthguard (a flexible appliance fitting inside the mouth protecting the teeth and jaw from trauma) is typically last on a fighter's list of priorities.

The mouthguard, or mouthpiece, as it is often called, is the most important item of equipment a boxer can take into the ring during a fight or sparring to prevent chronic and acute head injury.



Ted "Kid" Lewis is generally credited as being the first to use a mouthguard

Mouthguards, first used in boxing by Ted "Kid" Lewis around 1913, are designed to protect the mouth, teeth, and mandible (jaw), and as a result cushion the effect of concussive blows to the jaw. A well-fitted mouthguard should remain securely in place during activity, allow speaking and not limit breathing, and be durable, resilient, odorless, and tasteless. The temperomandibular joint (TMJ), where the jaw is connected to the skull, should be protected so that a force to the jaw is not transmitted to the skull and brain. The mouthguard should protect against the following conditions:

1. Lacerations to the lip, cheek, and chin
2. Fractures of the facial bones (especially the cheek bone and mandible)
3. Permanent jaw injury or fractures
4. Broken teeth
5. Teeth being knocked out or displaced
6. Concussions
7. Cerebral hemorrhage
8. Neck injuries where the lower jaw is jammed into the upper jaw

In professional and amateur boxing, there are few regulations regarding mouthguards, except that they are required (some jurisdictions require a back-up mouthguard as well). There are three main types of mouthguards:

The stock sports guard is a ready-made, inexpensive mouthguard that can be purchased at most sporting goods stores. It is bulky, often uncomfortable, and cannot be adjusted to fit. The jaws must be closed for it to remain in place, and it can interfere with speaking or breathing.

The "Boil And Bite" mouth-formed mouthguard can also be purchased at most sporting goods stores and some dental offices. Softening it in hot water allows it to form to the boxer's mouth. It is shaped by the teeth, using finger, tongue, and biting pressure. However, it can become loose with wear. It can also interfere with breathing and speaking.

The custom-made mouthguard is made after a dentist takes an impression of the boxer's upper and lower jaw. It should cover all the upper teeth and a portion of the gum above the teeth. It firmly cradles the upper teeth so it stays in place. The dentist can customize the fit and individu-

alize the form to the needs of the boxer. Unlike the first two mouthguards, it will *not* interfere with breathing and speaking. Furthermore, if a boxer has missing or crooked teeth, or a poor bite, a custom mouthpiece can be properly adapted. It is usually constructed out of polyvinyl acetate and polyurethane, and it will not alter with boiling.

More and more boxers prefer the upper and lower connected mouthguard. These can give added support to the jaws, lock them in place, and further cushion the impact of blows. It takes at least a day, if not more, to make properly. Under emergency circumstances, however, newer materials are being used to make suitable individualized mouthguards within a few hours.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

A left from Louis Azille sends Wayne Braithwaite's mouthpiece flying

According to Las Vegas dentist Dr. Adam Persky, who works with many fighters, including Wayne McCullough and Vassiliy Jirov, the most important physical characteristics of a mouthguard are:

1. Tensile strength (amount of stress it can be subjected to before breaking)
2. Softness
3. Compression percent (maximum amount the material can be bitten without distortion or causing discomfort to the boxer)
4. Uniform density (equal measurements of at least 1½-2 millimeters throughout the guard).

As punches are delivered, a well-fitted mouthguard should dissipate the energy rather than have it transferred to underlying tissue and teeth.

Dr. Persky mentions several things a boxer can do to make their mouthguard last longer.

"Before and after each use, the boxer should rinse it with *cold*, never hot, water or a cold mouth rinse. It can be cleaned with toothpaste and a soft toothbrush, and stored in the case that was provided with a small amount of mouth rinse and water. Exposure to high temperatures should be avoided. If it develops holes or tears, or becomes loose, it can irritate the teeth and oral tissues. This can diminish protection."

Lastly, Dr. Persky recommends the boxer take his mouthguard to every dental visit. Children embarking on a boxing career must have their mouthguard changed as they grow.

The boxer should spar, train, and perform regular exercise with their mouthpiece. "Boil And Bite" mouthpieces can even change shape during the course of a single bout depending on how the fighter is clenching or grinding his teeth. It can then contribute to the fighter having a false sense of security. Every boxer should invest in two custom-made mouthguards. All others are inferior and inadequate for the boxer's needs. Once made it should never be altered except by a dental professional. Although a dentist-made mouthguard can cost anywhere from $100 to $200, it is certainly less expensive than several thousand dollars to replace a tooth, repair oral-facial lacerations, or fix a broken jaw.

It is extremely difficult to study the effectiveness of mouthguards in relation to brain injuries in boxers. One reason there are no definitive studies on boxers is due to the numerous variables related to a boxer's skill, age, and anatomy. According to Nevada State Athletic Commissioner Dr. Flip Homansky, "Although Nevada mandates that a fighter's corner have two mouthguards, there are no specific requirements as to the quality or effectiveness. This is unlike the detailed requirements on handwraps. We need to gather a database on current use in order to determine whether specific measures would benefit the fighter."

Within the next few months Nevada will begin this process. No one can put a price on protecting the brain during a fight. Unfortunately, we remember that gloves protect the hands and allow a fighter to deliver more punishment to another, while we forget that a professionally made mouthguard, while protecting the facial features, is a shock absorber for the skull and brain. It is the best investment for a boxer's safe future and healthy retirement. ■

Questions about mouthguards can be sent to Dr. Adam Persky, whose contact information can be found at www.smileshapers.com.

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

YESTERDAY'S HEROES

Growing up, I watched Mike Tyson demolish every opponent put in front of him. Then I watched Oscar De La Hoya start his career at 130 pounds and win belts all the way up to 160. And I also watched Roy Jones outclass all of his opponents for the last 15 years. But now Father Time has caught up with Jones and his career is officially over. I realized that the end was near, but I still couldn't believe it. He was Superman for goodness sake. But a crushing right hand from Glen Johnson and Jones' head bouncing on the mat made all of us believers. As he lay on the floor, my heart stopped for a brief moment. Not because I care so much for Roy, but because all the great fighters I grew up watching are on the downside of their careers. Perhaps this is why I root for Miguel Cotto, Zab Judah, and Jermain Taylor. I need to develop a relationship with some new talent. With Tyson, De La Hoya, and Jones all suffering recent knockouts, it is truly an end of an era. But I am not too sad because the next great Superman is right around the corner.

MICHAEL FRIEDLANDER
Jersey City, NJ

TIME FOR ROY TO GO

Roy Jones was knocked out for the second time in a row, and it wasn't a TKO; he was counted out. Even the great ones lose their edge as their careers goes on, but when a fighter such as Jones fails to admit to himself that he lost fair and square, as Roy did to Antonio Tarver, it's called denial. Glen Johnson came to fight and knocked out Jones with a single punch. Jones came to rap like some MTV jerk and got what he had coming. Pack it in, Roy, before you get seriously hurt.

JOEY INTRAVIA
Bethpage, NY

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Roy Jones is counted out by referee Bill Clancy, bringing into question whether or not he should ever box again. Readers Michael Friedlander and Joey Intravia both wrote to express their feelings in the wake of Jones' latest defeat.

DON'T STOP NOW!

Congratulations to Bernard Hopkins for successfully defending the middleweight title for a record 19th time. Judging by the perfect form he showed knocking out courageous Oscar De La Hoya, I think Hopkins could go on for another three to four years. And now that he's setting a new middleweight defense record every time he fights, I think he should try to break another record: the record for the most successful defenses in any weight division, which is currently held by Joe Louis, who tallied 25 defenses of the heavyweight title. This isn't out of the realm of possibility for Hopkins. If he could fight three times in 2005, three times in '06, and once in '07, it would give him a grand total of 26 defenses by the time he is 42.

TY MYKESON
mmfjarlie@hotmail.com

INSPIRATIONAL EXECUTION

The recent "execution" of Oscar De La Hoya by Bernard Hopkins has me convinced that Bernard is one of the greatest fighters of all-time. "The Executioner" is pound-for-pound the best fighter in the world and deserves his second Fighter of the Year honors. It is remarkable what Hopkins has done with his life

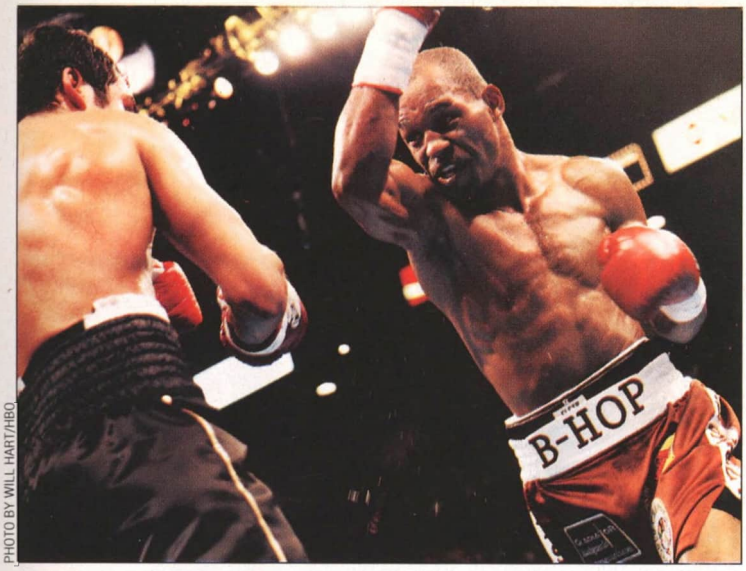


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Bernard Hopkins rips into Oscar De La Hoya en route to the biggest victory of "The Executioner's" career. Readers Ty Mykeson and Jamal Bowman were impressed by Hopkins' performance, while Mykeson feels 'Nard should keep going until he tops Joe Louis' record of 25 successful defenses.

after being released from prison. He is an inspiration to me and I hope he keeps on going.

JAMAL BOWMAN
Cleveland, OH

PAYING MORE FOR LESS

This is a topic that has me really burning up as an avid boxing fan. I am not a fair weather boxing fan that only tunes in for a Tyson or a De La Hoya fight. I watch Fox Sports, the *Friday Night Fights*, and Michael's Ballroom, as well as classics on ESPN. I have also been watching the price for pay-per-views go up and up since the first Holyfield-Tyson fight from $39.99 to $54.99. Also, the number and frequency of PPV telecasts has increased at the same time that the number of undercard bouts shown has decreased.

What burned me up the most about the recent Hopkins-De La Hoya show was that as well as charging the inflated rate of $54.99, they only showed two undercard fights, one of which was a first-round knockout. To make up for this, HBO Pay-Per-View chose to have Larry Merchant and a member of the Nevada boxing commission stand ringside and engage in a discussion about the cut on Oscar's hand. What made it worse was that there was a fight going on behind them!

What's wrong with HBO? I didn't pay to watch Larry Merchant talk. I will never buy another PPV fight again, regardless of who is fighting.

JAMES HAVDOUGLAS
Everlast1682@aol.com

THE MOST IMPORTANT PUNCH

I think the Glen Johnson-Roy Jones fight should stand as an example of the importance of the jab. While Johnson's left jab didn't always land, much less land with much force, it did something that many people didn't notice: It distracted Jones and put him off his rhythm. It seemed, at least to me, that Jones did not look comfortable all night long, and in large part that was because Johnson constantly threw his pesky jab. The jab allowed the slower Johnson to continually stay in front of Jones and neutralized his speed. Many people think that a jab is most successful when it is thrown hard, but many times it is good simply as a tool that short circuits an opponent's offense by preventing them from getting set.

ANDREW SCHAFER
Vancouver, British Colombia

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

I'm a believer in THE RING Ratings because they are the best guide to the real champions. But I have an issue with the pound-for-pound ratings. How can Floyd Mayweather be only second to Bernard Hopkins in the P-4-P rankings, but fourth in the junior welterweight division?

ALAN BERG
Las Vegas, NV

[Editor's note: The divisional ratings are based almost entirely on accomplishment within that weight class. Mayweather has fought only once at junior welterweight, winning a decision over DeMarcus Corley, who went into the match as THE RING's number-five rated 140-pounder. The pound-for-pound ratings are based on a fighter's entire body of work and are far more speculative.]

"TITO'S" BACK!

I watched Felix Trinidad-Ricardo Mayorga on PPV, and even though I really liked the Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez fight, I consider Trinidad-Mayorga the Fight of the Year so far. It was the amazing war I was looking for, and lived up to expectations. Trinidad looked great and really is "Back With A Vengeance."

JAMES BAULER
discofreshness@wmconnect.com ■

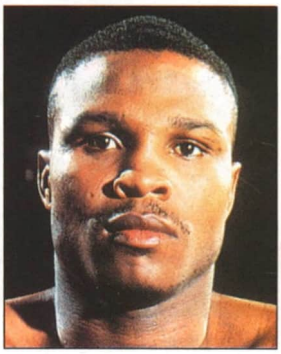
PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Ricardo Mayorga eats a knuckle sandwich delivered by Felix Trinidad during "Tito's" thrilling comeback fight at Madison Square Garden that resulted in a TKO victory for the Puerto Rican. Reader James Bauler thinks it was the best fight of the year so far.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

"BAZOOKA" LAUNCHING AGAIN



Quartey: Coming back

Ike Quartey's first career didn't end well. After a perfect 34-0 start, he was dealt a disappointing draw against **Jose Luis Lopez** in a fight nearly everybody thought he won, an even more disappointing decision loss to **Oscar De La Hoya** in a fight that could have gone either way, and finally a definitive loss to **Fernando Vargas** in a fight for which a disillusioned Quartey, with one foot out the door already, didn't train his hardest. Those three fights all came in succession, and they convinced the then-30-year-old to move on with his life.

So he did. He experienced great success developing property in his native Ghana. Financially, there was no reason to return to boxing.

But money isn't the only reason to change career paths, and Quartey had an itch that needed scratching. He watched De La Hoya lose to **Bernard Hopkins**, he watched **Roy Jones** get kayoed again, and finally he watched **Felix "Tito" Trinidad's** triumphant return. Quartey needed to be a part of this mix.

During his four-plus years away from boxing, Quartey had kept in touch with promoter **Lou DiBella**. In October, about a week after the Trinidad fight, "Bazooka" signed a contract with DiBella Entertainment.

"He's been struggling with this for a couple of years, thinking about coming back," DiBella told THE RING. "Now the timing is right. He was really leaning toward making a comeback before Tito's performance, but I think that fight helped him make up his mind. He saw that a couple of years of not being hit, maybe that's not such a negative. He's still fairly young (35 on November 27) and he never took a beating. And the truth is he didn't like his last memories in boxing. He didn't want to end that way."

So DiBella signed Quartey to a three-year promotional deal, with the understanding that Quartey can walk away at any time. The comeback will begin in January with an off-TV bout in Ghana, and if all progresses according to plan, Quartey will be ready for the De La Hoyas, Trinidads, and Hopkinses by the end of 2005. There will be no diving right into a dangerous fight, the way Tito did against **Ricardo Mayorga**, but that's understandable given how long Quartey's been away from the game.

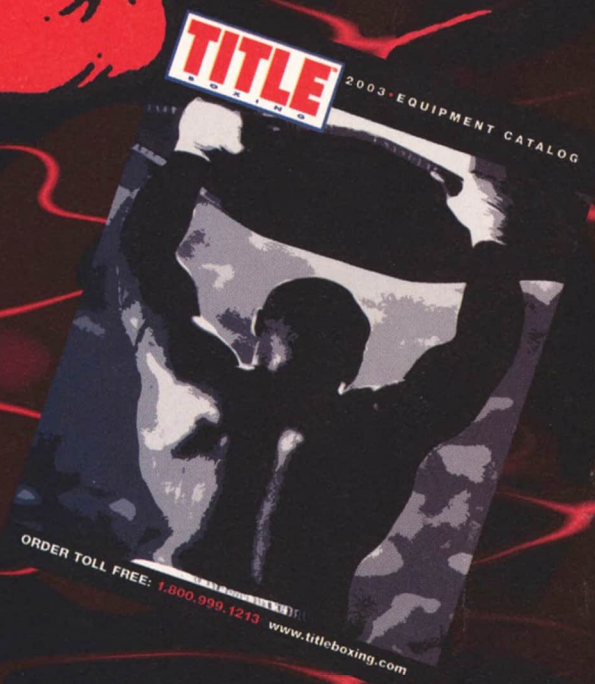
"He did give boxing up cold turkey for a while," DiBella revealed. "But he has gradually gotten himself back into it. He's run and he's done some sparring. If you look at him, you can see he's in decent shape. He just needs three months of serious training, and then we'll see whether he can pick up right where he left off. I'm curious myself to see whether he can. But I think the chances are good that he can still make a lot of noise at 154 and 160 pounds."

LISTEN UP

Featherweight champion **Manny Pacquiao** won't be getting the major fight he had hoped for to end 2004, but he will squeeze in a reasonable keep-busy fight on December 4 in Taguig, Philippines, against Guyana's **Gary St. Clair**. Pacquiao is certainly a heavy favorite, but St. Clair is undefeated in his last 19 fights, and all three of his losses have come on points against future titleholders … On the same date, December 4, **Jermain Taylor** will fight on HBO, probably against worn-down ex-titlist **William Joppy**. Taylor recently resigned with DiBella Entertainment and finalized a multi-fight contract with HBO … It's looking like **Arturo Gatti** and **Jesse James Leija** will do battle on January 29, 2005, in Atlantic City, with HBO televising. Don't expect many empty seats at Boardwalk Hall for that one … **Jose Navarro** will become the second 2004 U.S. Olympian to go for a major alphabet belt when he takes on THE RING's top-rated junior bantamweight, **Katsushige Kawashima**, in Tokyo on January 3 … ESPN's late-'04 return to slightly bigger budget boxing shows will continue with an attractive heavyweight bout between **Dominick Guinn** and **Sergei Lyakhovich** in December … Promoter **Don King** unveiled rough plans in October to eventually create a 24-7 "Boxing Channel" that will feature live fights, old fight films, and other boxing-related programming. ■

Navarro: Trying for a title

TITLE
BOXING



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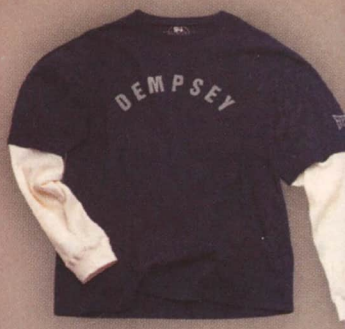

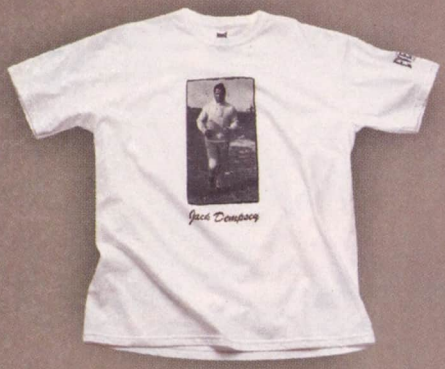

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